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BY THE EDITOR.

BEING honoured by an application from Mr. Clarkson to correct the press for him, I in return asked for permission to make such additions to his *Strictures* as I thought expedient, and as circumstances might permit: for Mr. Clarkson had imprudently parted with certain important documents, the return of which was looked for with anxiety.

This request was granted the less reluctantly, as Mr. Clarkson had already promised his friends that, whatever might be said in future, he would not again suffer the repose so desirable at the close of life, to be disturbed by any annoyance, however irritating, nor again undergo the painful labour of bringing back to his mind the nearly forgotten incidents of his youth: a necessity never imposed upon such a man, under such circumstances, before. The reader will therefore understand that Mr. Clarkson is not responsible for any part of this pamphlet but the *Strictures*, and the *Letter to Lord Brougham*.

A word, in explanation of the *Remarks on the Edinburgh Review*: all controversies which respect personal character involve facts on which a reader wishes to hear the principals, and also topics on which he would rather hear any one else. This is peculiarly the case here. Every sentence of the following *Strictures*, which is of an *historical* nature, will be received by all who know Mr. Clarkson with that implicit confidence which he is entitled to who is known to be incapable of falsehood; even in a matter that concerns his own honour. But admitted facts may be advantageously contemplated from the point of view *at which* an actor is seen; as well as from that which he himself takes: and those illustrations of conduct which arise out of a person's own character cannot proceed from himself;

as the eye cannot see itself. An admirable illustration of this remark will be found at the close of the letter that follows Mr. Clarkson's; which has rendered superfluous what I had already remarked. I was, besides, desirous of setting in a clear light the spirit in which Mr. Clarkson had been assailed, which required a closeness of examination that would have been too harassing to his own feelings to undertake.

In the exercise of the discretion allowed me, I forwarded to Lord Brougham Mr. Clarkson's letter, but I did not make known to him any other part of this pamphlet. I have reason to congratulate myself on doing so, as his Lordship, with the promptness natural to a warm and generous temper, sent me his answer; with an intimation, of which I have gladly availed myself.

I must, in conclusion, express my sense of the courtesy shown by the editor of the *Eclectic Review*, who has permitted me to make use of (as if a mere *brouillon* in my own closet) some matter incorporated in the Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Life.

It is right I should also state, that that portion of the Review (as well as the present Supplement) was written without the knowledge of Mr. Clarkson, and offered to, and accepted in, that journal — which stands in deservedly high estimation by a portion of the public who take a peculiar interest in such characters as Messrs. Wilberforce and Clarkson — on the express condition that the author of the rest of the article should be at liberty to reject whatever might appear to him dictated by too strong a feeling of personal friendship.

The observations on the minute-books were written last, but will not be found least worthy the reader's attention.

H. C. ROBINSON.

TEMPLE,
8th August, 1838.

MR. CLARKSON TO LORD BROUGHAM.

DEAR LORD BROUGHAM,

IT is a relief to my mind to think of you as being one of the readers—I am sure you will be one of the kindest—of my little book. It is the only one I have written with feelings of unmingled pain; for it is the only one I have written in defence of myself. And against whom is it written? Not against slave merchants, whose infamous traffic, as relates to this country, has been long since happily extinguished. Not against the agents of West India planters, but against the sons of the great leader of the Abolition cause; against the sons of our common head — of Mr. Wilberforce himself.

It is however some consolation to me to know that I did not enter upon this painful task, till I had tried, by every possible means, to convince those gentlemen how mistaken they were in the construction they had put upon my “History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade.” It was with the view of convincing them, that I applied to my two valued friends, Archdeacon Corbett, and Mr. William Smith, for their opinion on the matter in dispute; and well for me it is that I took that step, for there is no person now alive who could give such testimony. You, my dear Lord, knew Mr. Smith intimately — you know that he was one of the most upright, intelligent, and amiable of men; and one of

the most zealous, able, and indefatigable labourers in the cause of Abolition. He was the first individual who addressed our committee, after we had announced our object to the public. He wrote to us, to encourage us in our pursuit, and to offer us all the aid he could give ; and even to the last year, I might almost have said to the last hour of his life—the close of which you and myself heard of at the same moment—he was still labouring, with Mr. Buxton and the Anti-Slavery society, in behalf of oppressed Africans. Archdeacon Corbett, I believe you did not know. He was a man whom, if you had known, you would have admired and revered. He entered very early into our cause, and enlisted many of the more respectable families in the counties of Salop and Montgomery in its favour ; and kept alive our interests there. We journied together twice, over a great part of these counties, in search of evidence. In many points the Archdeacon's character resembled that of our late revered friend, Mr. Wilberforce. Like him, his whole conduct throughout a long life was governed by Christian principles : he had the same compassionate tenderness for the sufferings of all his fellow-creatures ; the same generosity in relieving them ; the same peculiar delicacy in conferring favours. As a large landed proprietor, he watched over the interests of his tenantry, and was ever ready to give advice and assistance where it was needed. To the clergy in his Archdeaconry, he was kind and liberal ; and though he was warmly attached to the Church of

England and its interests, he was ever ready to unite with those who differed from him upon religious subjects in every good work. This is but a faint sketch of the virtues of this most excellent and amiable man ; but it will be sufficient to convince your Lordship, that the testimony of such a person may be depended upon. I have adverted to this testimony, because you can hardly remember the circumstances attendant upon the commencement of the Abolition struggle ; and it is the truth of this part of my History which the sons of Mr. Wilberforce call in question, and which I have felt myself called upon to defend.

But, though you are so much younger than either Mr. Wilberforce or myself, still, from your close intimacy with him, you must have seen enough of the relation in which we stood towards each other in the latter period of our lives, to know whether Mr. Wilberforce thought me to be the mean and degraded being which his sons would represent me to have been. Of one thing however I feel an assurance in my own mind ; which is this, that if Mr. Wilberforce had written his own life, his work would have been of a very different complexion, as relates to me, from that which has been written by his sons.

If I remember right, you came into the field of active labour in 1804 — a short time before the first victory was won — for your work was referred to repeatedly in the debates, especially by Mr. Wilberforce. It was then that I first had the pleasure of knowing you. Since that time you have done

noble service to the cause ; you carried a bill for making those who engaged in the Slave Trade guilty of felony — the first time it was branded as a crime ; — and you have been one of the greatest instruments in procuring the Abolition of Slavery. By the exertion of your eloquence in the House of Lords, and at various meetings in the metropolis, you contributed to produce a feeling throughout the kingdom in behalf of the oppressed slaves, of which her Majesty's ministers became at length seriously sensible, and which was too commanding to be resisted either at home or in our Colonies ; and the consequence has been, that one island after another, throwing aside the stubborn prejudices of ages, has come into a holy union for emancipation. These blessed movements, too, succeeded each other so rapidly, that in the course of one session of Parliament, three fourths of the slave population in our numerous Colonies have been declared to be free, to the astonishment even of those who were the most sanguine in the expectation of those events. What then may we not hope for after this ? May not our American brethren — the participators, and inheritors of our crime — be induced to follow our example ? Can France long resist it ? Will any of the other foreign states, now holding slaves, remain unmoved by it ? But I leave it to your Lordship's more capacious mind to figure to yourself these prospects, and to draw from them the delight which they are capable of affording. I hope that you may live to see them fully realised, and that your

old age may be cheered and gladdened by them, as mine is by what has been already accomplished.

I am, my dear Lord,
your affectionate friend,

THOMAS CLARKSON.

Playford Hall, July, 20th, 1838.

To Lord Brougham, &c. &c. &c.

LORD BROUGHAM TO MR. CLARKSON.

London, July 29th, 1838.

DEAR T. CLARKSON,

OUR friend, H. C. Robinson, has communicated to me your letter, which you propose prefixing to your statement; and I feel bound to give you my testimony on this occasion. This I do with great willingness; while I most sincerely lament that in discharging what they deemed a duty to their father's memory, the sons of our venerated friend Wilberforce should have given you any pain.

I have repeatedly heard him speak of you, both before and after the publication of your History, and I never remember any expression on his part but that of the greatest kindness and affection towards you. I have frequently heard him, in perfect good-humour, allude to things which he considered as defects, though of a trivial nature — as your sanguine temper, &c.; but I never heard

him utter a word of disapprobation upon any thing connected with your work: it is true, that the "*Life*" seems to deny his having read your History, or at least done more than dip into it: but in this there surely must be some mistake. I perfectly well remember his speaking of one passage, in which Mr. Phillips is spoken of, and not that he had never perused the book. Indeed, the above denial does not appear very consistent with what the "*Life*" elsewhere states, of his only objection having been to our friend Stephen being too little praised. I can further vouch for his having to myself taken the same objection; and then, with his usual kindness and charity, he added, that this was probably owing to your having been little among us after Stephen's return from St. Kitts.

It was he (Wilberforce) who first introduced me to your acquaintance; and I distinctly recollect his telling me at the time how much he rejoiced that I had done you justice in my book upon Colonies; he added, "for Thomas took the field before any of us." I have heard him say the same thing in public, I think in the House of Commons; but that he said so at a public meeting, a few years before his death, I am quite certain. Although Granville Sharp had attacked Slavery generally — and, on one question connected with it, had gained an important victory; and although Mr. Ramsay and one or two others had denounced the horrors of the West Indian system, I certainly had always heard you admitted to be the person who substan-

tially began the controversy — who first brought the question forward. That this was Wilberforce's view of the matter also I really never had any more doubt than that he knew your name to be T. Clarkson. But I need not add, that this never for one moment made me question or undervalue the services of that great and good man; under whom, as our leader, we all were proud to avow that we fought the good fight, which has at length been crowned with victory. I must do you the justice to add, that I never heard you on any one occasion take a different view of his inestimable services and transcendent merits, nor ever name him without the most warm affection and the deepest veneration; neither did your book leave any impression on my mind like that which it seems to have produced upon some of his family. Whoever reads what you have said of him, towards the middle of your first volume, must be unreasonable indeed not to be satisfied of your viewing his labours in the same light with the rest of mankind.

All this indeed may perhaps be shown at length in the pamphlet which you are bringing out. But there is one thing which I can speak to, from a very long and very intimate acquaintance with you of five and thirty years, far better than you — and I do so the more readily, because what I am going to say is not wholly of a complimentary nature, and because it relates to the part of the "*Life*" which I am afraid has given you the most uneasiness — I mean your letters about the Subscrip-

tion. The necessity of printing these, or any part of them, I confess myself unable to perceive : they are not like the amiable and beautiful one about your brother John's promotion (in which little contest I hold Wilberforce clearly right, and you as clearly wrong ; though, as he says, wrong from an excess of amiable feeling for John's interest) : — that letter, the sons have done quite right in printing ; though you may feel a little hurt at it, nothing can do more honour to their father's memory : but how any man can have supposed that respect for his memory in any way made it necessary to print the letters about the Subscription, is to me wholly incomprehensible, for they have no bearing whatever upon Wilberforce, nor upon the Abolition, and are only calculated to give you pain. I took the liberty of expressing my opinion on this subject to the authors, as soon as I read that portion of their most interesting work. But I must add, that, as always will happen when private matters are partially dragged before the public, the printing of those letters tends to give a most untrue representation of your character and turn of mind. I know you so well, and am so fully acquainted with your active and anxious temper, that I am quite certain you would have written as much, and a very great deal more, about any thing which was going on respecting any other person, friend, or even stranger, nay, I might add, about any dumb animal, or any other thing in which you happened to take an interest for the

moment. You, like most other men who have rendered great services to their species, never can feel interested in any thing by halves; and you, like them, do not always apportion the zeal of your exertions to the importance of your object. I am sure I have seen you write twenty letters about getting something done at a particular time, which you thought should be done, when, upon the least reflection, you must certainly have seen that it did not signify many straws whether or not it was done at all, and not a single straw whether it were done one day or another. I hope you won't be angry at my mentioning this little peculiarity, when I acknowledge that you share it with the most useful and eminent of mankind. But your friends are all aware of it; and they also know that any attempt to represent you as a person at all mindful of his own interest would be much too ridiculous to give any body but yourself a moment's uneasiness.

With best regards to Mrs. C., believe me, &c.

Yours very sincerely,

H. BROUGHAM.

T. Clarkson, Esq.

POSTSCRIPT.

IN consequence of some communication with Lord Brougham, Mr. Justice Patteson addressed the following letter to Mr Clarkson. I have satisfaction in giving it publicity, inasmuch as it shows what the habitual language of Mr. Clarkson has been concerning Mr. Wilberforce ; and though this has not been directly, yet it may, by inference, be considered as called in question by the Messrs. Wilberforce. Therefore the testimony of the learned judge will have great weight — though it concerns a point of subordinate importance, and leaves untouched the more important statements contained in the life of Mr. Wilberforce, and commented upon in Mr. Clarkson's Strictures.

H. C. R.

33. Bedford Square, August 4. 1838.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE heard with much regret, but certainly with no surprise, that the statements made in the life of the late Mr. Wilberforce and in the Reviews as to yourself are very distressing to you. I cannot believe that the writers intended to give you pain, much less to misrepresent any thing : but it is matter of astonishment to me that any such statements should be made ; and having in my earlier days so frequently heard you speak of him, when I have seen you at your brother's (my uncle's) at Purfleet, and at your own house, and at my father's, I cannot refrain from stating to you in writing what I have said whenever the subject

has been mentioned in my presence, that I have very often heard you speak of the late Mr. Wilberforce, and invariably in terms of the warmest respect and affection, ascribing to him the principal share in that glorious victory over the Slave Trade, when I, being, if I may be allowed to say so, connected with you, was disposed to magnify your exertions in the great cause. My first acquaintance with the character of Mr. Wilberforce was derived from conversation with you and my uncle (your brother); and from you both I learned to look up to him with the highest admiration.

Other persons have had much more frequent opportunities of knowing intimately your sentiments on this and other subjects: but I think that no one can have heard them more unreservedly than I have in the privacy of family intercourse; and my recollection is very clear as to their being such as I have above expressed.

Believe me to be, my dear Sir,
always yours faithfully,

J. PATTESON.

*Thomas Clarkson, Esq.
Playford Hall.*

2

STRICTURES.

STRICTURES,

&c. &c.

I DID not expect, in the seventy-ninth year of my age, to be called upon to defend the correctness of any part of my "History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade," published thirty years ago, against any one, and least of all against two of the sons of my late revered friend, Mr. Wilberforce, his biographers. My history was in his hands for twenty-five years before his death, and he, who was well acquainted with all the material facts recorded in it as they occurred, never himself intimated that it contained any misstatements. The charges made against me in "the Life" resolve themselves substantially into this one, that I have *claimed for myself* an honour, *due to Mr. Wilberforce* alone, in suggesting or executing the measures, which led to the successful result of that great undertaking—the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

Now to this I have first to answer, that I have never claimed any such honour any where in my history before mentioned. I obeyed only the dictates of my own feelings, when I embarked in the cause. I did but discharge what I thought

a duty ; and the consciousness of having discharged it, however imperfectly, affords me now a consolation, which the applauses of the world cannot give, nor the contumelies heaped upon me by the biographers take away.

But, though I have claimed no honour, I did in my history record facts, and state circumstances, in which I was an actor, not with any design to draw attention to myself personally, but to show in what manner the cause had been undertaken, and by what means brought to a successful issue : and when I find the two sons of my late revered friend venturing to deny, or at any rate to insinuate a doubt of the accuracy of any of my statements, then a *feeling*, which I hope will not be confounded with a vain desire of distinction, namely, *a love of truth*, constrains me to vindicate my own veracity, and show in what spirit I have been arraigned. In order to do this I must begin by laying before the reader the origin of the controversy, which has unhappily arisen, and, I am sorry to say, between those who ought not to have entertained any but friendly feelings towards each other.

Soon after Mr. Wilberforce's decease, I received a letter from Mr. Robert Wilberforce, telling me that he was about to draw up a memoir of his father's life, and requesting a loan of any letters from his father to me, which I might have in my possession, as they might be useful to him in compiling it, it being his intention, as

far as possible, to “make his father the narrator of his own history through the medium of the communications, which he addressed to his friends.” Among these, adds Mr. Robert Wilberforce, “his letters to you were, I believe, both very numerous and very important.” The application, thus made to me, was made *in very friendly and respectful terms*, so that I suspected no ill-will towards me on his part; nor do I think that any existed in his mind at that time. I sent him therefore such letters as I could find, and explained to him how it happened that his father’s earlier letters had been destroyed. In fact it would have been impossible for me in the midst of my labours, living, as I did, in lodgings, coffee-houses, and friends’ houses, to have kept them distinct from the hundreds and thousands of letters, which in the course of the first few years of our struggle I received and answered with my own hand. Mr. Robert Wilberforce was satisfied with this explanation, and only expressed his regret that he could not have them. In this regret I participated truly at the time he wrote, as I wished to be useful to him; but now, since the publication of his father’s life, I have much more reason to regret the loss of these letters than he can have, as they would have supplied incontrovertible evidence in this my present defence. Not being able then to assist Mr. Robert Wilberforce in the way he wished, I recommended him, as a substitute for these letters, to read my “History of the Abolition of the Slave

Trade," which must be in his father's house, and which would give him a considerable insight into his father's most important labours. I was far from anticipating the return I was to receive, and not a little surprised at receiving the following letter :—

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I have put up the letters, with which you were so kind as to favour me, and am ready to forward them to any place in London, where you will be likely to receive them. I have put up with them a small volume of family prayers by my father, which I request you to accept as a mark of my obligation for the friendly manner in which you answered my application for assistance. As I found my task was greater than I could execute in any reasonable time, I have prevailed on one of my brothers to undertake the whole of that part of it which relates to slavery and the slave-trade. But I have not thought it necessary to reserve for his use the letters with which you favoured me, as they throw no light on the subject in question : of a few of them, as being interesting in themselves, I have reserved copies.

“ And here I would willingly stop, and without explanation leave my brother to say what he finds fitting to the public ; but I cannot help thinking that having been in correspondence with you on the subject, it would be disingenuous, if I did not state to you what I feel, that it is impossible any biographer of my father should refrain from mentioning ;—I allude to the line which must be taken

on the abolition of the slave trade. The impression which, as far as I can see, your history of that cause is calculated to convey, is, that my father was *originally engaged in it by you*, and that he was subsequently a *sort of parliamentary agent, of whom you availed yourself*. Now, that neither of these statements is correct I have abundant evidence. I could hope indeed that the impression which your book conveys, was not that which you intended to give; but the erroneous conclusion, to which it leads, my father's biographer will be obliged to notice; he will be compelled to show both that Mr. Wilberforce did *not originally enter* upon the cause at *your suggestion*, and that when he had taken it up, he was the principal, by whom its operations were directed.

“ I do not say this, Sir, from any feeling of disrespect towards you, but on the contrary because I am unwilling that you should only learn along with the public at large the tone which the writer of my father's life must needs take on such a subject. No one feels more reverence than I do for your labours in that holy cause; and I am sure that my brother will endeavour to state that which the claims of truth no less than of filial duty require him to express, in a manner *as free as possible from all insult* and unkindly feeling.

“ Believe me to remain, dear Sir,

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ ROBERT J. WILBERFORCE.

“ July 18th. 1834.”

I own I was astonished when I read this letter ; I knew not what to make of it. The interpretation which it put upon certain passages of my history (and what these passages were I have never yet been able to discover), was not only such as it would have been impossible for me to have intended consistently with truth, but such as I never supposed any man in his senses could have put upon them. I turned, therefore, the subject over and over again in my mind, in order to try to account for the extraordinary view which had been taken of them. The first thing that occurred to me was this, that Mr. Robert Wilberforce, though my history was in his father's library, *had never read it before*, and that he knew not therefore who had been the actors in this great cause ; that he had been accustomed to think, from the applause given, and deservedly given, to his father by the world, that he, his father, had been as it were the sole author of, and that he alone had effected, the work of abolition ; that under this mistaken impression, he was *mortified* on finding from the perusal of my history, that I had done so much in that great work ; and that, *his jealousy having been thus excited*, he had unconsciously suffered the unjust impression to be raised in his mind that I *had advanced claims*, which I had never really advanced, and that those statements, which I had in truth made, *did actually detract from his father's glory, and this unjustly*. I believe that these were the feelings of Mr. Robert Wilberforce at the time mentioned. Nor would

he, I am convinced, have been less disappointed, or less excited, if I had had it in my power to send him his father's letters to me ; for he would have found nothing in these contrary to what I had said in my history relative either to the origin (in this country) or of the measures taken for the advancement of the cause in question. But whatever might have been the feelings of Mr. Robert Wilberforce, which occasioned him to be displeased with me, I could make an allowance for them. Indeed I could not but applaud a son for desiring to rescue his father's memory from dishonour, where he supposed it had been sullied, and I could excuse mistakes natural for a son to fall into in such a case. But I could not so easily tolerate the words, that in the forthcoming work his brother would endeavour to express himself in a manner "*as free as possible from all insult and unkindly feeling,*" implying that all insult could not possibly be avoided, but that there should be as little as possible. These seemed to me to be strange words from a son of Mr. Wilberforce to his father's friend ; for though many years had elapsed since the very close intimacy between us had subsided, the memory of our early friendship and our early labours could not, I thought, be lost in the family, and the sons must have had some knowledge of the relation in which I stood to their father. Neither could I help thinking that this ungracious sentence was a foretaste of what I had to expect in the forthcoming work. I determined, therefore, to state frankly my feelings, and at the same time to show

Mr. Robert Wilberforce *by citations from my history*, not only that he had *misunderstood me*, but that I had in some instances said the *direct contrary to what he had imputed to me*. I wrote to him therefore the following letter:—

“DEAR SIR,

“When I received your last letter, I cannot say whether I received it with the greater surprise or sorrow,—surprise, because out of the many hundred persons whom I have known to have read my ‘History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade,’ I have *not known one* who has *ever drawn from it the same inferences that you have done*; and with sorrow, deep sorrow, because if you persevere in your intention, as communicated to me in that letter, I fear that a public controversy between us is inevitable, or at any rate that such a controversy cannot be honourably avoided on my part: it cannot be otherwise than a most painful thought to me that Mr. Clarkson should be at variance with a son of Mr. Wilberforce, one of his oldest and most esteemed friends.

“Let us consider then in a calm and friendly manner what is likely to be the result, if your intentions should not be changed. In your letter to me just alluded to, you write thus—‘The impression, which, as far as I can see, your history of that cause is calculated to convey is, that my father *was originally engaged in it by you*, and that he *was subsequently a sort of parliamentary agent,*

of whom you availed yourself. Now, that neither of these statements is correct I have abundant evidence. I would hope, indeed, that the impression *which your book conveys* was not that, which you intended to give, but the *erroneous conclusions to which it leads* my father's biographer will be obliged to notice. He will be compelled to show, both that Mr. Wilberforce *did not originally enter into the cause at your suggestion*, and that *when he had taken it up*, he was the principal, *by whom its operations were conducted.* Now I must ask you, if ever this statement of yours, or a similar one, should be printed by you, what inferences would be drawn from it? The only inference would be, that *I had misrepresented Mr. Wilberforce*; that I had placed him *in a subordinate situation in order to exalt myself*, which situation he had never filled; and that I had endeavoured *to rob him of his well-earned fame.* But if such inferences should be made, I must pass in the minds of those who make them, both *as a detractor and a liar.* It would be impossible then, under such circumstances, that I should remain quiet, and that I should not appeal to the public for the restoration of my character.

“And now I come to another subject, in which your own character is concerned. I must be permitted to ask you, and you must not be offended at the question—where did you get your strange notions of my misrepresentations as quoted above, and which no one else (at least to my knowledge) entertains?”

You certainly did not get them *from my 'History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade.'* This book contains *no such impressions* ; you will not find in it *any one sentence* in either of the two volumes, which will sanction any one of your charges against me ; but you will find others, on the other hand, which *would contradict them*, if they were made, so that it is utterly incomprehensible to me how you could ever have entertained them. Let us see if I am now speaking the truth. The first of these charges makes me say, or at any rate insinuate, that *I engaged* your dear and revered father, *originally in the cause*, and that he *entered upon it, originally at my suggestion*. There are no words of mine to this effect, nor any from which such an idea (twist and torture them as you please) can even be insinuated : to show this I will begin with my first interview with him. It will appear (vol. i. p. 241.), that I was, at that time, in the daily habit of visiting members of Parliament, to present them with my book, 'The Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species,' and that, among others, I visited Mr. Wilberforce, whom I had never before seen. At this interview I have said, he stated frankly, 'that the subject had *often employed his thoughts*, and that it was near his heart. He seemed earnest about it, and also very desirous of taking the trouble of inquiring into it.' These are all the words I have used to describe this visit, and therefore it must be clear, as far as this first interview is concerned, you can collect nothing from them, on behalf of your first

charge against me. So far from *engaging* him, as a man engages an inferior, in this sacred cause, I went to him *as an humble* suppliant, merely to ask him to read my book, hoping from his perusal of it to procure his sympathy in behalf of a suffering people. And here I cannot help remarking, that it is my firm belief that the very short account now given of this my first interview, short and simple as it is, has been innocently, on my part, the cause of all your misconceptions on this subject. You were, I fear, surprised and disappointed to find that I had *first* introduced the subject to your father, and that he had *not first* introduced it to me; and I fear that you concluded too hastily from thence (a conclusion not warranted) that I had assumed to myself *the merit of the priority of movement* in this great cause, and therefore that you read the remainder of my history neither so carefully nor so impartially as you ought to have done; but it was impossible for me, if I adhered to the truth, to have represented things otherwise than as I had known them to have occurred.

“Let us now go to my second and third interview. I describe them thus (vol. i. page 241.): ‘Mr. Wilberforce having read my book, which I had delivered to him in person, sent for me. He expressed a wish that I would make him acquainted with some of my authorities for the assertions in it, which I did afterwards to his satisfaction. He asked me if I could support it by any other evidence. I told him I could. I mentioned Mr. Newton, Mr. Nisbett,

and several others to him. He took the trouble to send for all these. He made memorandums of their conversation, and, sending for me afterwards, showed them to me.' Now this is all the account that I have given of my second and third interviews, and therefore nothing can be collected from them, which can give the least sanction to the charge before us, but *quite the contrary* may be inferred from them; for it appears that your father now began to act for himself. It appears that he sent for me himself twice; but I *never engaged him* to do this; nor did I *engage him* to send for Mr. Newton, and other gentlemen, and to take the trouble of examining them, and of committing their examinations to writing. He did all this of *his own accord*, and, no doubt, because he thought it his duty to do so.

“ Let me now go to an interval of time, where your father is mentioned again, and which immediately followed my third interview, an interval of some weeks. I describe myself as engaged in this interval ‘ in endeavouring to enlarge my own knowledge of the great subject in all its various departments, and in keeping up my visits to members of parliament, but particularly to Mr. Wilberforce, whom I found daily becoming more interested in the fate of Africa. I now made to him a regular report of my progress. *He had also been making his own inquiries*, which he communicated to me in return. Our intercourse had now become frequent, no one week elapsing without an interview. At one

of these I suggested to him the propriety of having occasional meetings at his own house, consisting of a few friends in Parliament, who might converse on the subject : of this he approved ; and the first meeting took place which was on an evening. This measure was found so useful that certain other evenings, as well as mornings, were fixed upon for the same purpose.' (Vol. i. pages 249, 250, &c.) Now what can we collect from the above account which is in substance *all the account* that is given of the transactions of about seven weeks (as far as Mr. Wilberforce is concerned), which can warrant your charge against me? It is true that I took the liberty of *suggesting* to your father the good which might arise from meetings such as those now mentioned ; but it was a liberty which he always allowed me to take, when I had anything useful to propose for the furtherance of the cause : but not one word is there in this account about my *having engaged him in the cause*, or that he had *taken it up at my suggestion*.

“ Let us now proceed to a period about a week subsequent to this interval, when a most important event took place. At this time I dined with your father at Mr. Langton's. This was to me the happiest day I had then spent in my whole life ; for your father declared to the company then present, *and for the first time* in my hearing, ‘ that he had no objection to bring forward the measure of the abolition of the slave trade in parliament, when he was better prepared, and provided that

no person more proper could be found.' (Vol. i. page 254.) And now I must ask you who urged your respected father to make this glorious declaration? You can no where find in my account of this dinner, that he made it *at my suggestion*, or that I *engaged him to do it*, but that he made it in answer to a question put to him by Mr. Langton; nor that he had originally taken up the cause because I had invited him to do it. But it is unnecessary for me to go on, so far as relates to your first charge, for you can produce nothing from my book, except that I *introduced the subject first* to your father, and that he *did not first* introduce it to me, that can warrant you in having made it.

“Another impression, you say, which my history is calculated to convey, is, that ‘your father was *a sort of parliamentary agent*, of whom I availed myself.’ Excuse me when I say that nothing can show to me more decidedly that you have read over my history too hastily, than this second charge; for my history tells you *the direct contrary of that which you have inferred from it*, and this in the plainest language, as you shall now see. Having given the history of the formation of the committee, I conclude in these words: ‘Thus on the 22nd day of May, 1787, the representatives of all the four classes, of which I have been giving a history from the year 1516, met together, and were united in that committee, to which I have been all along directing the attention of the reader, a committee which, labouring afterwards

with Mr. Wilberforce as a *parliamentary head*, did, under Providence, in the space of twenty years, contribute to put an end to a trade which, measuring its magnitude by its crimes and sufferings, was the greatest practical evil that ever afflicted the human race.'—(Vol. i. p. 257.) So far, then, as it appears by the preceding passage, have I been from considering your father as my parliamentary agent, that I have mentioned him as *the parliamentary head* of the committee, and of *myself* also as included in that body. I need not say another word on this subject.

“You say again, that your father’s biographer will be compelled to show (you mean compelled by the statements in my History to show) not only that your father did not originally enter upon the cause at my suggestion, but that, when he had taken it up, he was the principal by whom its operations were conducted. This is your third charge, containing a direct insinuation that I have withheld from your father his just due, in not having held him up as the head, from whom all those great measures emanated (not parliamentary) which it becomes every principal, that is a *manager* or *conductor* of a cause, to provide from time to time for its support. Now my History tells you again the *direct contrary* of what you have insinuated; for I have given to your dear father the *highest eulogium, on this particular point*, of which my mind appeared to be capable. You will find this eulogium, in vol. i. p. 272, 273, in the following

words : — ‘ And in mentioning this necessity of distinct offices and talents for the accomplishment of this great work, I feel myself bound by the feelings of justice, to deliver it as my opinion in this place (for I may have perhaps no other opportunity), that knowing, as I have done, so many members of our legislature, for many of whom I have had a sincere respect, there was never yet one who appeared to me so properly qualified, in all respects, *for the management* (observe the word *management*) of the great cause of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, as he whose name I have just mentioned. His connections, but more particularly his acquaintance with the first minister of state, were of more service in the prosecution of it than they who are but little acquainted with political movements can well appreciate. His habits also of diligent and persevering inquiry made him master of all the knowledge that was requisite for *conducting it.*’ (Observe the words *conducting it.*) ‘ His talents, both in and out of parliament, made him a powerful advocate in its favour. His character, free from the usual spots of human imperfections, gave an appropriate lustre to the cause, making it yet more lovely, and thus enticing others to its support. But, most of all, the motive on which he undertook it insured its progress; for this did not originate in views of selfishness or of party, or of popular applause, but in an awful sense of his duty as a Christian. It was this which gave him alacrity and courage in its pursuit. It

was this which made him continue in his elevated situation as a legislator, though it was unfavourable, if not to his health, at least to his ease and comfort. It was this which made him incorporate this great object among the pursuits of his life, so that it was daily in his thoughts. It was this which, when year after year of unsuccessful exertion returned, occasioned him to be yet fresh and vigorous in spirit, and to persevere till the day of triumph.'— (Vol. i. p. 272, 273, 274.) I trust that you will have perceived by this time that this is a subject, as I have observed before, in which your own character, as well as mine, is concerned; for, if you should persevere in your intention as communicated to me in your letter, or if persons, reading what you may write, should be led to entertain but the slightest suspicion that any part of the contents of my History is not true, you will oblige — I am sorry to repeat — that you will oblige me, however unwilling I may be, to lay my case before the public, for the restoration of my character; and if I should succeed in my defence, I am sure that, however high your character may stand, you will feel yourself in a very unpleasant situation.

“There is yet another circumstance which I will take the liberty to mention. It is to me a matter of astonishment that you should not have thought that your new interpretation of my History, which furnished you with the three charges specified above, was *highly improbable*. When my History came out, there were no less than five of the

members of the old committee alive, exclusive of myself, all of whom *knew every thing that had passed between me and your father, and also at the time it passed* ; all of whom knew *how the cause had been brought into existence, and how it had been reared and supported*; and all of whom, therefore, *could have instantly found me out, if I had made the slightest trip in my account.* Was it likely then that I should have brought out my work under such circumstances, if the contents of it had not been true ? But much less likely was it that I should have published *untruths, robbing your father of his well-earned fame, in your father's lifetime* ; for he was, according to your supposition, *the aggrieved or injured person.* He too, like the old members of the committee mentioned, could have detected me on the first day of the work coming out ; and yet the work was before him, aggrieved and injured as you suppose him to have been, for *more than twenty five years*, and during all this time he never once complained to me of any mis-statements, though perhaps he had written to me hundreds of letters in that time, and had seen me personally fifty times or more. And what other reasons could be given for his not complaining, than that he knew my statements to be true ? He knew better than you do, who was not then born, whether I sat with him in one of his rooms in Old Palace Yard, and introduced, *first introduced* to him, the subject of the Slave Trade there. He knew better than you do, whether I mentioned to him the names of

Newton, Nisbett, and others, at my second interview, and whether he dined at Mr Langton's, and what he said there. He knew to a *certainty*, but you do not (for yours is only a *conjectural interpretation* of my words), whether I had represented things as they really were, or whether I had forged them. But I think I have said sufficient for the present. I have only to hope that you will read my work over again, and this with the greatest care, before you realize your intention as disclosed to me. Should you think it right, after such a perusal, to realize it, I shall be compelled, as I said before, to defend myself. That I am very anxious that a controversy should not take place I am free to acknowledge, as well as the motive for saying so; for had any other person but the son of Mr. Wilberforce written me the letter which you have done, I should have left him to his own free course.

"I am, dear Sir, yours truly,

"THOMAS CLARKSON."

I really did suppose that this letter to Mr. Robert Wilberforce, which proved, by *citations from my History*, that the conclusions which he had drawn from it had no foundation; and which showed besides the interest which I took, not in robbing his father of his glory, but in adding to it, would have had some effect in making him see, and perhaps acknowledge, his error. But no such thing. He replied to me, it is true; but *never noticed any part of what I had said in my own defence*. All that I could

collect from his answer was, that he intended to persevere in his attack upon me, in conjunction with one of his brothers, and that he would endeavour to admit nothing but *what was fair and Christian*. This answer runs thus :—

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I have just received your letter on my return here from a short excursion. I certainly cannot be surprised that you should have felt annoyance at the receipt of my last, although I am sure that I endeavoured to express myself in as kind and conciliatory a manner as I could. Its contents, however, would no doubt strike you the more, because, as you mention, you did not aim at, nor do you appear to have been aware of, the impression which, according to my judgment, the work conveys. Indeed, when I wrote to you, it was with the more reluctance, because I feared that, when my ground of dissatisfaction was stated to yourself, it might assume a hostile form, which it might be possible to avoid when addressing the public. For if, as you are persuaded, your History conveys no such impression as I derived from it, then, whatever is advanced with a view of negating such impression, will not have the appearance of conflicting with your testimony. Yet still it would have been unfair for a person who, like myself, had been in communication with you, to have left you in ignorance of the judgment which I had formed of your work.

“ The principal view with which I write at present

is, to assure you that my letter was not intended at all to question your veracity, but merely the propriety of the conclusions which you appear to me to have conveyed. I should be doing myself, as well as you, great injustice, if I let myself be supposed to entertain so unworthy a suspicion as that which you appear to have apprehended; and I am sure that whatever is said on the subject will be conveyed in such a way as, while it puts forth the facts of the case, will not provoke needless controversy. It is arranged, as I mentioned to you, that this part of the work should be done by my brother, so that my inferences will be checked by the judgment of another person.

“And now, my dear Sir, I know not what I can say further, except that, as far as I am concerned in the work that comes out, I will use every endeavour to admit nothing but what is fair and Christian. It has been with the utmost pain that I have written to you at all on the subject. I will only in conclusion express my hope that, when the volume appears, you will be so kind as not to let any apprehension that it is written in a spirit of hostility against yourself induce you to see in it any thing more than the work itself expressly conveys.

“I am, dear Sir,

“Yours very sincerely,

“ROBERT T. WILBERFORCE.

“*Martin Bridlington,*
“August 19th, 1834.”

I did not answer this letter immediately, for I began to see that nothing that I could write myself would convince Mr. Robert Wilberforce that he had taken an erroneous view of certain passages in my History. Still I was desirous that the unreasonable conclusions which he had drawn from my work should be removed if possible from his mind before he committed himself to the press ; and I could think of no way so likely to effect this, as by applying to some common friends of the late Mr. Wilberforce and myself, to give their impartial judgment of the matter in dispute, with permission to communicate their sentiments to Mr. Robert Wilberforce, if he should desire it. I determined, therefore, first to bring to my recollection, as far as I could, the names of all his father's most intimate friends, but of such only as were acquainted with him at the time when the great question of Abolition *was first started*, and who also knew both him and me at the time, and who had been actively engaged with him in promoting the cause, and who, moreover, were likely to know who was *the first mover in it*. But alas ! when I had made out a list of their names, I found that death had made such havoc among them, that only two of this description were then alive. To each of these I wrote. The first of them was the venerable Archdeacon Corbett, of Longnor Hall, Shropshire. This gentleman, after having taken the case into serious consideration, wrote me a letter, dated August 2d, 1834, from which I extract the following passages : —

“I am truly concerned for the *erroneous view* which Mr. Robert Wilberforce has taken of your History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, both for his own sake, and his father’s sake, and more especially on account of the trouble it gives you, and most especially as it is a tax upon the eyesight you have partially recovered. When Mr. Robert Wilberforce applied to me for the letters I had received from his father, I sent *them all*, without looking at any.” My friend, the archdeacon, then proceeds to state precisely how these letters were delivered in London to the agent pointed out by Mr. R. Wilberforce, but adds that Mr. R. Wilberforce had not then acknowledged the receipt of them. He proceeds: “The impression on my mind is, that *you were always looked up to as the person who brought the question forward*, and that Mr. Wilberforce *always acknowledged you as such*. Mr. Wilberforce must have had information from somebody. He had it from you. From that time he took the management of the business in the House of Commons, and your severe labours commenced of travelling through the country to find out witnesses to support by evidence those inquiries Mr. Wilberforce caused Parliament to institute. I saw much less of Mr. Wilberforce after the publication of the History of the Abolition than in former years. But I never had the smallest suspicion that *he or any other persons* drew any conclusion from that work *similar to the one* you represent Mr. Robert Wilberforce to have expressed.

“It is to your honour that you took up this question upon learning the evil. It is equally to Mr. Wilberforce’s honour, that he acted upon the information you gave him. Nor do I see how that honour would be increased if he had discovered the horrors of the Slave Trade in any other way. You are the head of the measure so far as the *first motion is concerned*, and so far as *individual labour could establish the truth of the premises*; Mr. Wilberforce was *the head of the measure as bringing it before parliament*, and using therein the information you had procured in the way he thought best calculated to insure the Abolition of the Slave Trade. If you think that this letter will give any satisfaction to Mr. Robert Wilberforce, I have no objection to its being communicated to him. No comments upon your History can raise Mr. Wilberforce’s character in the eyes of the public. And I never could suspect that any one would have drawn any inference detrimental to it from your History, *And I do deprecate the introduction of any such discussion, for the sake of the deceased as well as the living.*”

I will only remark upon this letter, that it takes a just view of the relative situation in which Mr. Wilberforce and myself stood towards each other in the promotion of this great cause, and that it settles all the points at issue, as far as the arch-deacon’s knowledge is concerned. It states that *no such impressions as those entertained by Mr. Robert Wilberforce could be collected from my*

History, with which few men were more familiarly acquainted, and that I was *always looked up to as having brought forward* the question, and that his father acknowledged this *to be true*. And where can we find a person of higher character than he who gave this testimony? Yes! my friend Archdeacon Corbett stands as high in moral reputation as my deceased friend Mr. Wilberforce himself did, being like him distinguished for the habitual exercise of every Christian virtue. I may however just add here an anecdote, in which Mr. Wilberforce and myself were concerned, and which is not irrelevant. In the year 1791 Shropshire was among the counties which petitioned Parliament for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The meeting which had been called by the High Sheriff for that purpose was most respectably attended. Thanks were voted there to Mr. Wilberforce for having come forward in Parliament in support of this cause of humanity, and to me also; so that I was as well known at this time to have been a labourer in it, as Mr. Wilberforce himself was. But this is not all; for when Mr. Wilberforce returned thanks to the meeting through Archdeacon Corbett, who was deputed to convey this resolution of the county both to him and to me, he replied in that humble, candid, and sweet spirit which was so conspicuous in him, that these thanks were rendered more acceptable to him in consequence of my name being added to his own on this occasion.*

* Mr. Robert Wilberforce alone knows whether this letter to Archdeacon Corbett was among *all the letters* which the arch-

The other gentleman alluded to was Mr. William Smith, late member of Parliament for Norwich. This gentleman, as soon as he knew, in the spring of 1787, that Mr. Wilberforce was to take up this great cause in Parliament, waited upon him, and offered him not only his parliamentary assistance but his private services. A friendship grew up between them, in consequence, of the closest and most affectionate kind, from that day, which continued, uninterrupted, till Mr. Wilberforce's death. Mr. Smith was among the most useful coadjutors of all the friends that Mr. Wilberforce had about him. He examined the witnesses against Sir William Dolben's Bill with the happiest effect, as well as those who were brought against us, if I may be permitted to say so, during the tedious examinations before a Committee of the House of Commons in the years 1789, 1790, and 1791, and, in conjunction with other of Mr. Wilberforce's friends, examined and supported our own. He spoke in Parliament, and spoke well, whenever the cause required. He was closetted with Mr. Wilberforce, to my knowledge, sometimes two or three times a week, examining documents, writing letters for him, and aiding him with his advice. He knew, moreover, the machinery that had been employed in promoting the cause, and *who* had framed it and kept it in motion; and besides, he knew me,

deacon appears to have sent back to Mr. Robert Wilberforce, and why it was not noticed in the "Life of his Father."

as early and as intimately and as well as he knew Mr. Wilberforce himself. I determined therefore to lay the case before him, and to ask his opinion upon it; but as I was either very much engaged, or very unwell at the time, I desired Mrs. Clarkson to write to him in my stead. Mr. Smith, having received Mrs. Clarkson's letter, went to work directly. He took the trouble to read over my History again, and to make notes upon it, and then, after mature deliberation, he sent her the subjoined answer:—

“MY DEAR MRS. CLARKSON,

“After various hints which I had heard thrown out, I was not surprised at the receipt of your letter; and I have kept the promise I made you of refreshing my memory before I answered it. I have with care looked through the original essay and the two volumes of the History, lamenting as I do, that what I hoped to be regarded as the happy termination of the business (as to England), should be soiled by any thing like jealousies between parties, who have both contributed so essentially to the common object, and with so much disinterested devotion of every faculty of mind and body. In one instance, however, it is as it should be; your good husband, you say, seems easy about his own reputation, as I think he well may, while a greater anxiety is shown by those who are contending, as they think, for the just fame of a father, a father too, recently taken from them, and who

possessed every claim which private and public virtue could establish to their veneration and love, and yet, whose brightest distinction to all posterity must be, as the *leader* of that band of orators and statesmen, by whose unconquerable patience and energy the monster was at length overcome. Nor do I see any considerable difficulty in reconciling the different claims (I will not call them 'adverse'); for Mr. Clarkson himself points out the lines of separation, priority of date and subsequent line of action. I use his own words in calling all those who were engaged so meritoriously from the first even down to 1788 'forerunners,' consisting of writers or actors; and among these worthies your husband appears in the first rank, as having, in his memorable and efficient essay, fully and methodically discussed the subject in all its branches, justified all the past and stimulated all future attempts at the Abolition unanswerably, and I should have thought irresistibly, if the painful experience of eighteen years had not evinced the contrary. Those years proved that it was not by the operation of reason and feeling only that the end was to be attained; but that political power and station, aided by the highest exertion of eloquence, would be found necessary to its accomplishment. With respect to *prior enlistment* in the service, I should decide that Wilberforce *must yield to Clarkson*; that, at their first interview (related in the History of the Abolition, vol. i. page 241.), Wilberforce truly stated 'that the subject had often employed his thoughts, and

was near his heart' nobody can doubt; and I think it most probable, that he would have taken it up and carried it through '*as the leader,*' even though he had not possessed the advantage of so invaluable a coadjutor as Clarkson proved himself to be; but at that instant Wilberforce was but recently entering on the active course in which Clarkson *had been for two years employed*; nor can it be denied that Clarkson's share of the enterprise was most laborious, and the least attractive of public notice or praise, though both were liberally bestowed by active supporters of the cause, and by *none more than by Wilberforce himself.*

"On the priority in time I think no more need be said; but it seems that Clarkson has been suspected of arrogating to himself priority of station too. That the services of Mr. Wilberforce 'were at first secured and afterwards directed by him'—I own that *I cannot draw any such inference from the History itself, or from the remembrance of that intercourse with Wilberforce (to me equally delightful and honourable) which, arising out of a unity of feeling on this subject, continued, uninterrupted by one hour even of coolness, till his death deprived me of one of the best and kindest friends with which man was ever blest. Mr. Clarkson was of our constant council; his advice was continually asked, and, I dare say, generally followed; for particulars on this head cannot now be brought to mind, but assumption or dictation I remember none; nothing was said by Clarkson himself, or by*

any third person, which could lead to a doubt whether Wilberforce was not looked up to as the head, the leader, the director of the cause. Ready indeed he always was to receive information and counsel; he sought it every where; he kept almost open house for the reception of such as came to offer it; and the continued access to the ministers, which his intimacy with the higher classes, especially with Pitt, afforded, pointed him out as, on that account among others, peculiarly fitted for the station which I never heard that any man disputed with him, during the many years that I lived almost as much under his roof as my own, and heard and saw all that passed.

“Having been requested to give an opinion on the nice question thus started, I thought myself bound to qualify myself for the task by referring to books long since written, and to memory for conversations and circumstances long since passed. I cannot flatter myself but that my discussion will appear tedious even to those who may be sufficiently interested in the subject to attend to it; and I therefore close with a summary as short as I can frame, namely, that Mr. Clarkson appears to me to have been naturally and not illaudably desirous of vindicating for himself the full share of merit due to his *disinterested, well-directed, and indefatigable labours* in the great cause; but that, neither is he justly chargeable with endeavouring to detract from the praise of Mr. Wilberforce in his more public and loftier province, nor does his History of the Abolition,

perused with a reasonable allowance for his almost necessary feelings, leave any such impression on the mind.

“Accept this, my dear Madam, and believe me ever truly yours,

“WILLIAM SMITH.

“*Blandford Square,*

“August, 1834.

“P. S. You are at liberty to make what use you may please of this letter; but as I have not kept any copy of it, I will thank you either to send me one, or to return this.”

Having now received these answers from Mr. Smith and Archdeacon Corbett, I replied to Mr. Robert Wilberforce's last letter as follows:—

“DEAR SIR,

“Hoping that you may have returned to East-Farleigh, I sit down to acknowledge the receipt of your last letter from Bridlington, of August the 19th. It has certainly been satisfactory to me to learn that you had no intention of questioning the veracity of my “History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade,” and also that you would use your endeavours to admit nothing in the work that is coming out but what is fair and Christian; but it is unsatisfactory, inasmuch as I cannot collect from it, that it is your intention to abandon those hasty conclusions, which I proved to you in my last letter, *by*

quotations from my History, to have been erroneous. I have now to inform you that I have laid the case confidentially before two of your father's oldest friends for their impartial judgment upon it. Their answers have been returned. Both of them agree in stating, that the conclusions just mentioned *are no where deducible from my History*; and yet one of them took the trouble to read the two volumes over again, to mark every page where your father's name was to be found, to go back to passages in the pages which were thus marked, and then to give each of them a full consideration, before he would give his opinion. Under these circumstances I must wait patiently till your work comes out, and see what it contains, before, in a matter in which my reputation is concerned, I can determine what I ought to do. Of one thing, however, you may be assured, which is, that I will not 'let any apprehension that it is written in a spirit of hostility against me,' induce me 'to see in it any thing more than the work itself conveys.'

"Yours,

"THOMAS CLARKSON."

I received no answer to this letter from Mr. Robert Wilberforce himself, and I was left to conjecture, as well as I could, what his intentions might be towards me, from the proceedings he took through the intervention of friends. He probably wanted courage to ask a favour of me, with the consciousness of his designs, and therefore applied to a highly re-

spected common friend, to interpose on his behalf. I was, as one of the two then surviving members of the committee for the Abolition Society, in possession of a precious document, namely, a collection in five volumes of the minutes of the proceedings of the committee, containing the history of all their acts and resolutions from the 22nd of May, 1787, the day when we first constituted ourselves a committee for the great work. He, Mr. Robert Wilberforce, was not insensible to the importance of such a collection; he therefore requested Mr. Fowell Buxton, late M. P. for Weymouth, to inquire whether it was in my possession, and, if it were, to borrow it for his use. Mr. Buxton did apply to me, but informed me that the books were wanted by Mr. Robert Wilberforce, to assist him in the composition of his father's life. Threatened as I was, I nevertheless did not hesitate a moment in complying with the request. I sent them to Mr. Robert Wilberforce, and he has them still. Now that I have experienced in what way the Messrs. Wilberforce think themselves at liberty to select and glean and extract from the numerous letters, which they found among their father's papers, this act seems one of imprudence, yet I do not regret it. It shows the strength of my conviction, that these books would confirm all, and not contradict any of, the material statements in my History. I now waited patiently for the appearance of their work, their father's Life; but in the following spring, my impressions concerning the hostile intentions of these gentlemen were consi-

derably modified by the following letter, which I received from my esteemed friend, Mr. William Smith : —

“ MY DEAR CLARKSON,

“ I have just received a request from Mr. Samuel Wilberforce, rector of Brighton in the Isle of Wight, stating that the part which has been allotted to him in what relates to his late father’s Memoirs, renders him very desirous of seeing the paper, which you may recollect I drew up, and transmitted to Mrs. Clarkson, as I hope to the satisfaction of both parties. To this I have no objection, particularly as he says ‘ he should prefer the request should come from me, as there would be in his doing it a sort of formality, which, *after what had passed*, he (Mr. Clarkson) might *mistake for a declaration of intended hostility*, which he (Mr Samuel Wilberforce) *sees no reason to apprehend* after the words *you* have used, which are in his opinion *abundantly sufficient to refute the mistaken impression which some have drawn from the perusal of his*, that is, your book.’ I have, therefore, only to repeat that I shall thank you to furnish me with a copy, as I have no objections to Mr. Samuel Wilberforce possessing it ; nor do I recollect any change having taken place in my sentiments on the subject.

“ *Blandford Square,*

“ 9th May.”

The paper, being the letter already inserted, was forwarded by him to Mr. Samuel Wilberforce; and I took this opportunity of writing to that gentleman myself. My letter to him was in a like spirit to that I had written to his brother. I copied, however, and sent him, some extracts from Archdeacon Corbett's letter. I warned him also against pressing the points on which his brother had written to me; and I gave him an account of a public meeting at which his father declared, that *I had preceded him in the great work of Abolition*, of which I shall give an account hereafter; but about which the biographers have maintained a *prudent* silence. I received no answer, so that I was left in ignorance in what spirit it had been received; but the tenor of Mr. Samuel Wilberforce's letter to Mr. Smith differed so widely from those of Mr. Robert Wilberforce to me, that as he, not his brother, was to write that part of the Life which related to me, I was justified in expecting that, when it came out, it would not manifest the hostility first threatened by his brother.

The Life of Mr. Wilberforce, by his Sons, has now appeared — the book that was to contain *nothing but what was fair and Christian, as little insult as possible*, and in which it was hoped I would “be so kind as not to let any apprehension that it was written in a spirit of hostility against me, induce me to see in it any thing more than the work itself expressly conveys.” On reading it, I

was not left long to doubt how these promises had been kept; for in vol. i. page 141. I read the following startling note: "Of this book," that is, my "History of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade," "it is necessary to declare at once, and with a very painful distinctness, that it conveys *an entirely erroneous idea* of the Abolition struggle. Without imputing to Mr. Clarkson any intentioned unfairness it may safely be affirmed, that his exaggerated estimate of his own services has led him unawares into *numberless misstatements*. Particular instances might be easily enumerated, but the writers are most anxious to avoid any thing resembling controversy on this subject. Contenting themselves, therefore, with this declaration, they will henceforth simply tell their own story *without pointing out its contradictions* of Mr. Clarkson's History." In terms, therefore, controversy is avoided. But how? By contemptuous silence; or by an imputation not in such language, but to the effect, that without meaning to be unfair, excessive vanity had led me into numberless misstatements.

But not content with this, the authors, who would, doubtless, wish to be thought intimately acquainted with their father's thoughts and feelings, add the following words: "Mr. Wilberforce himself looked into the book, and saw enough to induce him to refuse to read, lest he should be compelled to remark upon it. With a ready forgetfulness of himself, which they who knew him will understand at once, he told Mr. Clarkson,

when obliged to give his opinion, that he was *entirely satisfied with what was said about himself*, but that, undoubtedly, justice had not been done to Mr. Stephen."

These sentences are the exposition of the authors' Christian feelings towards me; and this is their fairness, for I cannot separate them. In the whole course of the work there is *the least possible reference* to me, or my History, or my actions. My services *are concealed* as much as possible; and because these authors are unable to point out in my History a single sentence which is incorrect, they avail themselves of the possession of *their father's papers*; and from among the many hundred letters which I have written to him (but I know not how many have been preserved) they pick out sentences *from one or two*, which they publish for no other purpose *than to vilify me* in the public opinion, under the manifestly shallow pretence of vindicating their father's honour. Such is the book, which I am under the painful necessity of animadverting upon at a time of life, and in a state of health and spirits, ill-adapted to the performance of such a duty. I consider the defence of my moral character (and that only I shall undertake to defend) as a duty. For, as a highly-esteemed friend of Mr. Wilberforce has well said, "When specific charges are advanced against any advocate of a public cause, tending to injure his credit in that character, duty to the cause itself forbids him to be silent." (See *Stephen on the Slavery of the*

British West-India Colonies delineated.) But before I notice these *extraneous* matters, brought into the Life of Mr. Wilberforce merely to depreciate my personal character, I must remove all doubt concerning the point at issue between the two biographers and myself, on account of which only the depreciation of my character is desired by them. I regret that the question should assume the shape of a comparison between the labours of myself and my revered friend, their father. It is they, not I, who draw the comparison. I honour his memory as much as man can do, but I cannot suffer the reproach of having written a book, which *contains many misstatements*, to rest upon me, because in showing that the statements in my History are in no one point disproved by the biographers, and that the counter-allegations made by them are either false in fact, or irrelevant in argument, it follows that the sons of Mr. Wilberforce have entertained extravagant and false ideas of his services, great as they were. The venerable Archdeacon Corbett * has stated with admirable simplicity and clearness, how idle such a controversy

* This venerable man is now no more. He died on the 22nd of June in the 80th year of his age. By his death I am left the only survivor of *all the old abolitionists*. But I am not left alone to lament his loss. Besides his family, the men of rank and fortune, the clergy, the magistrates, and the amiable and the good in the counties of Montgomery and Salop, will deplore the day, when one whose example had such a commanding moral influence was taken from them; and so will every one elsewhere, who had the honour of his acquaintance.

and such a comparison are. No pains have been spared on my part to make these gentlemen sensible of this; but in vain. Though the controversy has been *in form* avoided, the hostile and inadmissible pretensions are persisted in. The correspondence between me and Mr. Robert Wilberforce, which appeared at the beginning of this little work, shows, though the book of the biographers does not, what are the undeclared misstatements they charge me with; but before I proceed to point out these, I must notice one, which they seem to have abandoned. It appears from Mr. Robert Wilberforce's letter of July, 1834, that he had read my History of the Abolition so carelessly as to have imagined me to have stated, "that his father had been originally engaged in the cause by me." My answer to this, which has been given also, has shown that this charge was utterly unfounded. Now, in "The Life by the Sons," I find merely this notice of this answer. It is said, that I, *to my honour*, in a letter written in 1834, disclaimed having made this statement; and the passage is so framed that a reader might suppose that others had attributed to me what I had thus honourably disclaimed. The fact is, that none but the Messrs. Wilberforce themselves, as far as I know, ever drew the inference at all; and I had the trouble of proving, that I never said what they themselves must have known that I never said, if they had read my History fairly; and yet the

authors make no apology, but requite me in the way the reader is about to see.

The suggested misstatements are left to be collected by inference, but they manifestly respect my statement of the part I took in the great impulse given to the Abolition cause from the year 1786. I will now compare the statements in my History with those in the "Life of Mr. Wilberforce," and enable the reader to see what contradictions there are, and with whom the truth lies.

I must briefly remind the reader of that which is well known, that it was in the month of June 1785, that I read in the senate-house at Cambridge my Latin prize essay on the slave-trade. This composition, it is equally well known, gave such a turn to my mind as to form an epoch in my life; for after what I had thus written and publicly read, I could no longer keep my mind at rest. I could not divest myself of the feeling, which grew upon me from day to day, that it was the duty of some one to expose the horrors of this bloody traffic. I therefore began to turn my attention in the most serious manner to this important subject; but it was not till about five months after my return from Cambridge to London, that I was able to give my time to it. In the November therefore of the same year, 1785, *I began to collect farther materials than those exhibited in my prize essay for the information of the public, and it is from this time that I date my systematic exertions in this sacred cause.*

The year 1786 was one of uninterrupted labour. I brought out my essay "On the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, particularly the African," in the June of this year; and I do not hesitate to assert, that this publication was *the first act* to enlighten the people of England on the subject of *the commerce* at least. Mr. Granville Sharp had employed himself some years before in rescuing West Indian slaves. The cause of the negro, Somerset, decided in the King's Bench by Lord Mansfield, is well known; and the Reverend Mr. Ramsay had two years before laid open many of the horrors of the colonial slavery; but I know of no man, who had before that time *publicly exposed the slave-trade*, except the pious Anthony Benezet, who was then living in the United States; but as this estimable individual gained his livelihood by the honourable employment of school-keeping, he could only devote his spare hours to this object.

I spent a part of this year (1786) also in still farther enlarging my knowledge on this subject; for though my essay "On the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species" contained a sufficient number of authentic facts to rouse the most torpid into action, I did not know the traffic so systematically in all its branches as I thought I ought to know it. I employed myself, therefore, in 1787 in visiting persons who had been in Africa, in going on board of slave vessels in the Thames to look at their dimensions, the apparatus for their

voyages, and to pick up all the information I could get as to every branch of the trade. But while I was prosecuting these inquiries, I was engaged in another, and this a most important concern. By the advice of my friend Richard Phillips, so often mentioned in the early part of my "History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade," I visited personally those members of both Houses of Parliament, who at that time were reputed to bear the fairest character; I took my essay in my hand, and presented it to each, and implored him to peruse it, that he might become acquainted with this great subject. It was to be hoped that some of these might by means of my book be brought over to sympathize with the injured African, and that some one might spring up out of these, who would advocate his cause in Parliament. Among those whom I thus visited was Mr. Wilberforce. My History thus records this most important incident: "Among those whom I visited was Mr. Wilberforce. On my first interview with him he stated frankly that the *subject had often employed his thoughts*, and that *it was near his heart*. He seemed earnest about it, and also very desirous of taking the trouble of inquiring further into it. Having read my essay, which I had delivered to him in person, he sent for me. He expressed a wish that I would make him acquainted with some of my authorities for the assertions in it, which I did afterwards to his satisfaction. He asked me if I could support it by any other evidence. I told him I could. I

mentioned Mr. Newton, Mr. Nisbett, and several others to him. He took the trouble of sending for all these. He made memoranda of their conversation, and sending for me afterwards showed them to me. On learning my intention to devote myself to the cause, he paid me many handsome compliments. He then desired me to call upon him often, and to acquaint him with my progress from time to time. He expressed also his willingness to afford me any assistance in his power in the prosecution of my pursuits."

If this be not a wilfully false statement, it was *I who sought Mr. Wilberforce, not he who sought me.* And therefore it is certain, that at least at the commencement of our connection, it was *I* who implored his aid, he being a man of fortune, and in Parliament — not he who retained me in his services as *an agent.* Now with the strange prepossessions in the mind of the Messrs. Wilberforce, I have no doubt that this is the principal passage in my History, which they wish should be *believed a misstatement.* And so it would be, if that were true which they have written, I hope inconsiderately. They say (vol. i. p. 151), "Mr. Clarkson in the spring of 1787 was in London and was introduced to Mr. Wilberforce;" and in these few words this incident, as important in the history of Mr. Wilberforce's life as in my own, is thus *misstated.* I was introduced by no man to Mr. Wilberforce. I went to his door alone, with no other introducer than my book. I will add here, what I could not

with propriety have said in my History, nor would now, were it not rendered necessary by the allegations of his sons, that I found the subjects of slavery and the slave-trade deeply impressed on his heart, but of the *slave-trade* especially, he *had very little knowledge in detail*. He had already learned from Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Latrobe much concerning the treatment of the slaves in the West Indies, but he knew very little of the *African department* of the subject. He had little information concerning the natural productions of Africa, less of the various wicked modes of procuring or making slaves, and still less of the horrors of their transportation. I state this, not to depreciate Mr. Wilberforce's knowledge, nor to claim merit for being the accidental instrument of communicating it to him; but it will be found to have an important bearing on some of the allegations of his sons. Now in all these assertions concerning anything that passed between Mr. Wilberforce and myself, I shall obtain full credit from all who know me. Nor will that credit be shaken because the Messrs. Wilberforce haughtily decline to point out misstatements, which they say could be easily enumerated, and invite the reader to compare their "Life" with my "History." Alas! how many old friends still survive, who alone may be supposed willing to do this? Not one! as the biographers knew when they wrote their vapouring note. But if my solemn assertion needed corroboration, that is amply to be found in the conduct of Mr. Wilber-

force their father. I must be pardoned for applying to this part of my subject especially the general remark I have already made, that Mr. Wilberforce during his long life never intimated any dissatisfaction with this my account of my first intercourse with him, and no man so well knew whether it was *I who waited on him or he who applied to me*; whether I implored him to assist me in the great work I had undertaken, or whether he retained me in that which he had already himself begun.

Before I lay before the reader the evidence happily still in my power, proving Mr. Wilberforce's sentiments concerning me, I must complete the proof bearing on this question of fact, whether or not I have in my History misstated my just position with respect to the origin of the great work. I must add to the evidence, arising from the silence of Mr. Wilberforce, and the positive testimony of Archdeacon Corbett and Mr. Smith, that of another friend also well acquainted with Mr. Wilberforce, and who indeed *knew more of the earlier proceedings* of myself and the committee, *than either of these gentlemen*. This was Mr. Richard Phillips, of Lincoln's Inn, *one of the Religious Society of Friends*, and afterwards *one of the members of our first Committee*. He and myself were accustomed to work together every night, Sundays excepted, at his chambers at Lincoln's Inn, at the latter end of the year 1786, and beginning of the year 1787. He it was too, who knew all my out-goings and all my in-comings from day to day; what I did in the

morning I communicated to him in the evening. No person, therefore, was so well qualified as he was to speak to *my early movements*. I accordingly applied to him, as I had done to Archdeacon Corbett and Mr. Smith. He was at that time very ill in bed, and said to be dying, and I was anxious therefore to obtain his valuable testimony. This was his answer :

“ Illness, which still confines me almost entirely to my bed, has prevented me replying sooner to thy letter. My memory will not serve me to answer to all the minuteness of facts to which thou hast alluded ; but it is my *full belief* and impression, that thou *calledst upon William Wilberforce among other members of Parliament, to distribute thy book, ‘ On the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species,’* and to solicit aid and co-operation on the subject of the cruel treatment of the African race, and that this was *thy first acquaintance with him*.

“ I am not aware, nor do I believe, that William Wilberforce *had any thing to do with forming or organizing our committee* ; neither am I in the least degree aware that he was personally acquainted with any of its members. There cannot be a doubt that thou *didst take great pains in forming the committee*.

“ I have read thy History, I trust, with attention, and consider it *as a true history of the facts and circumstances which it relates* ; and it seems to me to contain such internal evidence, as of itself has a strong tendency to refute any misrepresentations of the real facts which it narrates.

“ It is a strong evidence in favour of thy History, that *it was published twenty-five years* before the decease of the late William Wilberforce, who surely never would have suffered such misrepresentations as thou art accused of, without making any observation thereon to the author.

“ It does appear to me that *ample justice* has been done to William Wilberforce *in various parts of thy History*, as a leader in this great concern.

“ I wish thou couldst induce Robert Wilberforce, his son, to furnish thee with the evidence, which, he says, proves that his father was the originator of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade.”

Finally, to complete this evidence, I will add the positive testimony of Mr. Wilberforce himself, who declared before his death, with that love of truth and justice which belonged to his character, *that I took up the cause before him*, and this in the presence of more than two thousand people, among whom I myself was one, little thinking that a day would come, when his sons would deny it, and thus bring my character for veracity into disrepute. The fact may be thus related: on the 15th of May, 1830, there was a great anti-slavery meeting, greater than was ever known before, at the Freemasons’ Tavern, Great Queen Street, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London. It was thought by others, and I thought myself, that it became me to propose that Mr. Wilberforce should take the chair. Of course I was to say something, and it was his business afterwards to address the audience.

This was done. Of the newspapers which gave an account of the proceedings, there were only three which published a report of any length, the "Times," the "World," and the "Record." The "Times" says, "on the motion of Mr. Clarkson Mr. Wilberforce was called to the chair," but does not give one word of what I myself then said. It then reports of Mr. Wilberforce, that after he had taken the chair he said, "that it was impossible to meet his old friend Mr. Clarkson, after a long interval, without finding his mind occupied (as no doubt his friend's mind was also) in looking back to earlier days of labour and warfare in the good cause. *In that warfare his friend had preceded him.*" — (*Times*, May 17, 1830.) The report of the "World" runs thus: "W. Wilberforce, Esq., on the motion of Mr. Clarkson, was called to the chair. The chairman observed, that it was with much satisfaction that he assured himself, that the necessity of detaining the meeting long was superseded by the firm hold which the subject before them had taken upon their hearts. When he saw at his side his friend Mr. Clarkson, his mind was occupied in looking back to the days of their early labours, and in thinking of those who had first engaged in the honourable and philanthropic work of attempting the liberation of thousands, whom Britain, the land of liberty and religion, had mercilessly enthralled. *In that work his friend had preceded him.*" — (*World*, May 24, 1830.) The report of the "Record" was as follows: "At

one o'clock Mr. Clarkson addressed the meeting to this effect: — 'Ladies and gentlemen, I rise to make a proposition which I am sure will be agreeable to you all: it is, that my old friend and fellow-labourer, Mr. Wilberforce, be called to the chair. I may say that this chair is his natural and proper right in this assembly. He is entitled to it as the great leader in our cause; as one who has always been foremost in its support. I hope he may live to fill it again and again, should a protracted continuance of our exertions be necessary; and that under his auspices we may carry it to a speedy and a happy issue.' Mr. Wilberforce having taken the chair (continues the 'Record') amidst loud acclamations, proceeded to address the meeting, — 'Ladies and gentlemen, I shall only now remark upon what you have just decided, that I could have been called to this chair by no person more dear to me than by my valued friend and fellow-labourer (for I wish to be known by no other name in this great cause). The purpose for which we are met is great; it is urgent; and when I see those by whom I am surrounded — when I again meet my esteemed friend, Mr. Clarkson, in this cause, I cannot but look back to those happy days, when we began our labours together, *or rather when we worked together, for he began before me.*' — (*Record*, May 20, 1830.) I shall close this account by stating the view which I have always taken of myself and of the other actors in this great cause. I have received both thanks and praises from many for my

labours in it. Now I have returned but one answer : “ You thank me for my exertions in the great cause of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, as if I myself had accomplished that great work. I certainly do think that Mr. Wilberforce could not have got on, as he did, without my aid, and that of the committee ; but neither could the committee have got on without Mr. Wilberforce and myself ; nor could I have worked to the effect attributed to me, without Mr. Wilberforce and the committee. But I may go farther and say, that neither could these three parties united have worked successfully without the voice of the people, nor would the voice of the people have been attended to, as it was, unless the minister of the day had been favourable to it. But I may go still farther and say, that neither could this powerful combination and union of men and measures have been brought about, if God had not bestowed his blessing upon the work. Thus let no man boast, but be thankful that he has been permitted to be useful on such a glorious occasion ; and I believe that this is the only way in which Mr. Wilberforce himself ever looked at it.”

To oppose to this mass of evidence, and cast a shadow of doubt over any portion of the conclusion to which it leads, what do the biographers bring forward ? Statements which will be found, as far as they are really facts, to have no bearing on the question. They relate, for instance, that Mr. Wilberforce’s benevolent feelings were excited on the

subject of slavery and the slave-trade, even in his boyhood, and that in 1780 he intimated to a friend going to the West Indies, his hope that he might one day be able to redress the wrongs of the negroes (vol. i. page 147.). I never heard this from Mr. Wilberforce himself, but I read it now with pleasure. It is not contradictory to, but confirms my own account of what had passed at our first interview. This is honourable to him. But the question is not in whose heart *benevolent feelings were first excited*, but *who first put the shoulder to the wheel*, who first conceived the project and acted upon it of rousing a whole nation to a sense of the national iniquity, and, by means of an organised committee, to pave the way for a legislative abolition of the trade.

Equally consistent with all I have before and now written is the conversation recorded by Mr. Wilberforce in 1783 with the Rev. Mr. Ramsay on the treatment of the slaves in the West Indies. The same remark applies to the account given of the intercourse with Sir Charles Middleton in 1786, and with Mr. Latrobe and Mr. Ramsay from whom he derived his knowledge concerning the West Indian slavery. All this is correct enough, except that one error has slipped into this part of the statement, I will charitably believe through ignorance. Though the biographers have put the date 1787 at the top of the page, (vol. i. p. 149.) in which this circumstance is mentioned, yet they say, " He (Mr. Wilberforce) was busily employed

pursuing these inquiries among *the African merchants* throughout the year 1786, and afterwards he got together at his house, from time to time, persons who knew anything about the matter." Now as respects the date 1786, I affirm on my own responsibility that *this is a mistake*; in all other respects it is true. The first persons connected with Africa whom Mr. Wilberforce ever saw for the purpose of obtaining knowledge on the subject of the African trade, were a Mr. Nisbett, then a surgeon residing in the Minories, London, Mr. Weuves, an African merchant, and Governor Miles of Cape Coast Castle; and the time of his seeing these persons *was not till the spring of the year 1787*. A prior possession of the knowledge, which these gentlemen might have communicated to Mr. Wilberforce on the African part of the question, is inconsistent with the degree of information I found him to possess on that subject when our acquaintance began. As to the meetings of others at Mr. Wilberforce's house, of which the biographers speak, this they might have learnt from my History and probably did; for to that History, though unacknowledged, and to the evidence I supplied them with, are they indebted for the greater part of the knowledge they possess of the early history of the Abolition.

Finally I beg to refer to the autograph memoranda annexed by the biographers to the fourth volume, which show that it was not till the year 1787*,

* When Mr. Wilberforce declared at the public meeting

that Mr. Wilberforce devoted himself to the Abolition cause, whereas I had taken it up and *devoted myself* to it from November 1785. I advert to these relative dates, not as if I thought the inherent or comparative moral worth of the act were in the slightest degree affected by the mere time of its occurrence, but because these memoranda supply a strong argument to repel the wanton attempt that has been made to fix on me the charge of a misstatement. The autographs are in these words : —

1. “ Sunday, 1787. — God Almighty has placed before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave-trade, and the reformation of manners.”

2. “ Sunday, half-past two o’clock, February 22nd 1807. Palace Yard.—Never surely had I more cause for gratitude than now, when carrying the great object of my life, to which a gracious Providence directed my thoughts twenty-six or twenty-seven years ago, and to my endeavours in 1787 or 1788. O Lord, let me praise thee with my whole heart.”

I have anxiously sought for other contradictions between the biographers’ story and my own, but I have found none ; lest however there should be any omission here or in any other part of this review of the work, I must here remark, that I have been in the course of it to a great degree

mentioned, that “ I had preceded him in the Abolition cause,” he evidently dated his labours, not from his boyhood, or from the time when he wrote to his friend Gordon, but from the time when he actually began to work, namely, the spring of 1787.

dependent on the kindness of friends. Having imperfectly recovered my eyesight by means of a surgical operation, it has been physically impossible for me personally to peruse every page of the Life.

I now proceed to the second paragraph of the biographers' denunciation of my History: "Mr. Wilberforce himself looked into the book and saw enough to induce him to refuse to read, lest he should be compelled to remark upon it." This is a strange insinuation. Do the sons of Mr. Wilberforce expect me or any other man to believe, that in fact he never read my History and that too because he thought so ill of my veracity, that he wished to remain wilfully ignorant of the falsehoods I was capable of writing? This is a singular suggestion from the eulogists of their father, and does as little honour to him as to me. It is contradicted by the whole tenour of Mr. Wilberforce's conduct towards me, which was ever affectionate and respectful, even till the close of his life, as I shall hereafter show. At present I must confine myself to what Mr. Wilberforce wrote soon after the work appeared. His first letter, merely acknowledging the receipt of it, I have destroyed, as I have habitually most letters. I have, however, found a short note from him, accidentally preserved perhaps in consequence of its accompanying a sonnet by a poet now forgotten, but in his day of some consideration — Hayley, who had forwarded it to him open for transmission, being a

compliment on my History. Mr. Wilberforce writes to me thus : —

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ With great pleasure I transmit you the enclosed *just tribute* from a veteran poet, in whom your publication has kindled a generous flame.

“ In haste, yours ever,

“ W: WILBERFORCE.

“ House of Commons,

“ May 25th, 1808.”

Now in order to see in what the *justness of this tribute* consists, we must read the sonnet itself. I can assure the reader that though it has been thirty years in my house, I never showed it to any person whatever, but my wife : —

“ Thou *just historian* of those toils complete,
 “ That terminate a nation’s guilt and shame
 “ In virtue’s blaze of philanthropic fame.
 “ Hail ! generous Clarkson ! with delight we greet
 “ Thee, worthy eulogist ! expert to treat
 “ Of all, whose pure humanity may claim
 “ Nature’s kind praise for their endearing aim
 “ To strike the fetter from the Negro’s feet.
 “ Now Africa, exult ! long injured clime !
 “ Justice at length upon thy shores descends,
 “ Embracing truth in her appointed time,
 “ Whose blessing, as the breath of Heav’n, extends ;
 “ Receive with joy, and gratitude sublime,
 “ This *faithful chronicle* of all thy friends.”

We see now what is meant by Mr. Wilberforce’s *just tribute* to me. The poet does not praise me

for any of my own labours in the cause of injured Africa, but because I *had given a faithful history or chronicle* of all those who had been her friends from the beginning, and had given to every man his due. If this be so, then Mr. Wilberforce's "*just tribute*" to me from a veteran poet is a confession that I had given a true and faithful record of what different individuals had said or done, and of course of *what he himself had said or done*, among the rest, in forwarding the abolition of the slave-trade. This is therefore a testimony of his own opinion as to the correctness of the different statements in my History. Now will any person, who knew Mr. Wilberforce's character, believe that he would have said this unless he had previously read my work?

Having discussed the first clause of this portion of the note of the biographers, which states that "Mr. Wilberforce looked into my book, and refused to read, lest he should be compelled to remark upon it," I proceed to the second portion, contained in the following words: "*With a ready forgetfulness of himself*, which they who knew him will understand at once, he told Mr. Clarkson, when obliged to give his opinion, that he was entirely satisfied with what was said about himself, but that undoubtedly justice had not been done to Mr. Stephen." Do the sons of Mr. Wilberforce wish it to be proclaimed to the world, that his ready forgetfulness of *himself* was such, that it would induce him to write that which he did not think?

I well recollect receiving his letter, complaining of my having omitted all mention of Mr. Stephen. I wrote to him in reply, and it is probable that from my reply, the biographers derive their knowledge on the subject. It would be idle in me to call on them to publish it. I am sure that of my numerous letters in their possession, they are ready to publish all that they think discreditable to me, and withhold all that does me honour. I must, therefore, content myself with writing from memory ; that I believe I wrote to him in reply ; that during *the first nine years* while the committee met at the Old Jewry, Mr. Stephen resided in the West Indies, during which time I had neither seen his face, nor heard his name, and that during *the next eight years* I was absent from London, having retired into the country to recruit my shattered constitution, so that my acquaintance with Mr. Stephen was recent, having seen him only a few times after my return to the committee, before the final passing of the Abolition Act. The "Life" expressly states, that Mr. Stephen did not commence his labours in the committee until my active services were suspended. My omission of Mr. Stephen was occasioned by my then knowing so little of him. I so explained it, and my explanation was *satisfactory to Mr. Wilberforce*, which he acknowledged in a subsequent letter. I believe too that Mr. Stephen was himself aware of this. He did me the honour to present me with a copy of his admirable work "The Slavery of the British West-India Colonies delineated," in two volumes, and I find in

the preface to the first volume (p. 70.) he adverts to the circumstance. Speaking of his own services he says, "So far was I from being ostentatious of these services, that they *had remained unknown*, even to some of the most distinguished friends of the cause. Can there be a stronger proof of this than that in Mr. Clarkson's History of the Abolition my name is not to be found?" This is not literally true, though it is substantially. His name appears, but merely as having been elected a member of the committee. This is, I own, a just cause of reproach to me, and I fear that others too have a like, if not so great a cause of complaint. It would be unworthy of me if I were to hesitate confessing that the manner in which the latter part of my History is hurried over, having been written in the country, and without adequate materials, is a great fault in my History, which I afterwards was sensible of, and which has exposed me to just animadversion and criticism. I must however add, that I sought for, but could no where find, any record of the proceedings of the committee during my absence, nor do I believe that any such exists. As respects Mr. Stephen, I must have been a prophet and not an historian, if I had in that book attempted to record his high services to his country and to humanity. I had indeed already had a few opportunities (which I afterwards more frequently enjoyed) of witnessing his zealous exertions in the great cause of Negro Emancipation. Mr. Stephen was a man of great talents, of unimpeachable integrity, of ardent zeal ;

but he had not then acquired his best title to distinction in the world. His posthumous fame will rest on his great work "The Slavery of the British West-India Colonies delineated." He has also written several able and useful pamphlets, but which, from their temporary nature, must be fugitive. But his great book will be classed among the most masterly works of political and moral philosophy, which the present or any age has produced. The first volume was published in 1824; the second in 1830. *My History of the Abolition* in 1807.

At that time I also knew as little of another eminent person, Mr. Zachary Macauley, whose name likewise does not appear in my History (except as a new member of the committee), but who will hold a very high place in the future history of the abolition of Negro slavery in the British Colonies. That gentleman was the friend and associate of Mr. Stephen, in all his philanthropic labours. He was a man of great ability, undaunted courage, indefatigable industry, and warm benevolence. I witnessed, with admiration, his labours in the Anti-slavery Society. He had to endure the fate, which such powers and virtues invite. He was the object of bitter persecution and malignant slander by the tools of the West-India planter and colonial party. But he survived them all, and lived (a felicity denied to his friend Mr. Stephen, but alike conferred on me and our common friend Mr. Wilberforce) to witness the grant of legal emancipation, though not the enjoyment of actual liberty by the Negroes.

I will now advert to some of the numerous proofs scattered throughout "The Life," that the *evil spirit* manifested in the note, upon which I have now so fully commented, did not subside in the course of it. Of this the manner in which the formation of the London Committee for the Abolition of the Slave-trade is mentioned, supplies a striking illustration. The biographers say, "Several humane persons had been for many months communicating privately on the subject, and they now at once determined upon immediate action, and formed themselves into a committee to raise the funds, and collect the information necessary for procuring the abolition of the slave-trade. Their first meeting was held on the 22nd of May 1787, when Granville Sharp was elected chairman of twelve who met together, most of whom were London merchants, and, all but two, quakers."* (Vol. i. page 151.) This

* I myself made a third; but it being the purpose of the biographers to represent me as the hired agent of the committee, of course my name could not be alluded to by them; and as there were two other gentlemen not quakers, members of the committee, it must be said all but *two* were quakers.

The biographers have carried their determination to separate me from the committee, even into the tabular view which they give of the progress of the Abolition cause. Under the year 1787 stands, "Wilberforce avows his design of moving for Abolition. Abolition committee formed — Thomas Clarkson *employed* to collect evidence!" This is cautiously worded. The writers would not venture to say, Thomas Clarkson *hired by the committee*. They could not say, Thomas Clarkson *engaged* to collect evidence, because in that case he must have been engaged by somebody; but the word *employed* just suited their purpose. The committee might have employed me, or Mr. Wilberforce might have employed me, or I might have employed myself.

is all the notice they have taken of this important event, the most vital and important of any which could have occurred for insuring the success of the cause ; for without it scarcely could proceedings have been commenced, certainly not carried on. *They do not even notice me*, though I was the person, as Mr. Richard Phillips has informed us, who took “great pains in forming the committee.” And where I ask did the biographers obtain their knowledge of these “several humane men having communicated together privately for months on this subject?” Undoubtedly from my History, for nowhere else could they have found it. But even this circumstance they do not state accurately. The gentlemen of whom I speak in my History “as having associated themselves together for the purpose of enlightening the public mind on this great subject” had done so, two years before I came to London, in 1785. These all indeed, except one (Dr. Knowles) became members of the committee. They were five in number, and I prevailed on six others to join us, and we set to work, as may be seen in my History. That same History must have told the Messrs. Wilberforce *who* it was that set on foot and organised the London Committee ; *who* suggested to Mr. Wilberforce the meetings at his house ; *who* concerted with Mr. Langton the invitation of Mr.

But the intention of the writers is evident enough. They wish it to be understood by their readers, that I was at this time employed by the committee as their agent.

Wilberforce to a dinner, at which he was formally invited to undertake the management of the cause in Parliament, Mr. Wilberforce never having declared himself till that day, on that subject. And yet none of these circumstances are mentioned. But why *this studied*, this *determined concealment*? Why, but because it did not suit these biographers to let their readers know that I was a *principal* in these *first* or *early* measures, which contributed to bring the great question before the public, lest some of their readers might infer that I might possibly have been *the originator* of it in this country?

Another remarkable instance of *concealment*, though of less importance, is the silence observed with respect to the incidents at the great meeting at Freemasons' Tavern, of which I have before spoken. The account in "The Life of William Wilberforce" is disposed of in the following summary manner: "He" (Mr. Wilberforce) "consented therefore on the 15th of May to *take the chair* at this meeting. All the old friends of the cause gathered round him; and Freemasons' Tavern overflowed with an unusual audience. This was the last time he took any public part in London." (Vol. v. p. 317.) But surely since it was the last, it was a memorable meeting, and the biographers might have expatiated a little upon it. They might have said Mr. Clarkson introduced him to the chair. In three lines they might have named the nine or ten old friends, who gathered round him at this farewell meeting. The occasion was interesting, as the

writers intimate; but among those old friends, and the oldest of them all, was Thomas Clarkson. *No honourable distinction*, however, was to be given to me, and, above all, the *avowal of Mr. Wilberforce* was *to be concealed*, because it refuted their own pretences — *the avowal that I took up the abolition cause before him.*

I proceed now to what I consider as *irrelevant* matter, introduced *merely to degrade my character*, because that degradation, if effected, would assist the Messrs. Wilberforce in maintaining the undisputed and sole pre-eminence of their father as *the originator of the work of abolition.* These parts will, I believe, be considered as stains and blots by all those who will feel most strongly all that is really beautiful in their work.

They make known that in the year 1794 I received a sum of 1500*l.*, — by whom advanced does not appear; and they print, without authority, some confidential letters from me concerning it. As far as the mere fact of receiving the money is concerned, they could not help, in copying Mr. Wilberforce's own statement of the transaction, showing that I received this money, not as an eleemosynary gift, but *as that* to which I had a *moral*, though not a *legal* right. They show that Mr. Wilberforce *himself* determined that this money should be raised for me. And I have only here to add, that Mr. Wilberforce did not form this determination till he was *fully satisfied* that the *whole* of the sum had been expended by me in

the cause; but that the expenses were of such a kind, that they could not, with propriety, be paid out of the funds of the Abolition Society. Mr. Wilberforce, as the biographers relate, speaking of me in a letter to Lord Muncaster, says, "The truth is that he (Mr. Clarkson) has expended a considerable part of his own little fortune, and though not perhaps very prudently or even necessarily, yet I think, judging liberally, that he, who has sacrificed so much time, and strength, and talents, should not be suffered to *be out of pocket too*;" and Lord Muncaster acknowledged *the justice of the reimbursement*.

I will now explain how it was possible that so large an expenditure could be incurred. There were two great points which I had to make known to the nation, namely, *the dreadful loss of seamen*, and the *barbarity of the treatment of them in the slave-trade*; in which both parliament and the public would be deeply interested. It was with this view that I took up, when at Bristol, the mate of the ship "Thomas" for the murder of William Lines, a seaman in that ship. To give the history of this transaction would be to fill many pages (see my History of the Abolition, vol. i. pp. 358—426.); I may, therefore, briefly referring to my account of that transaction, say, that I found myself compelled, on a sudden, to send a special messenger hundreds of miles for witnesses to sustain the prosecution. And, after our attempt to obtain justice was frustrated, I had to send back these witnesses

at a very serious expense ; the whole of which was defrayed by me.

Other similar cases, though of a less aggravated kind, occurred. My life was rendered miserable all the time I was at Bristol and Liverpool, a space of about five months, on account of the applications constantly made to me for redress, from the sailors of slave-ships. The barbarities practised upon them by the captains and officers in that cruel trade were such, that the accounts given me of them would not let me sleep at night. The consequence was, that I took up the cause of many of these deeply injured people. I had occasionally ten seamen at a time, and for weeks together, in London, whose cases were brought into the courts. Hence, great expenses for travelling backward and forward, board and lodging, and lawyers' bills to a *frightful amount*. I might, indeed, have avoided all these expenses, and (as Mr. Wilberforce intimates) they might have been imprudently, and even unnecessarily incurred ; but then I must not only have had a heart of stone, but I must have abandoned the conviction on which I set out, that *the more cruel I could prove this trade to be in all its ramifications and effects*, the more willing would both parliament and the people be to put a stop to it, and, more particularly, if it were proved to be so injurious to our marine. These expenses then fell upon me : I was the person who had brought them upon myself, and the committee could not, with propriety, nor consistently with the title of

the society, be required to pay them. The reader will the more easily comprehend the nature and the extent of this sort of expenditure, by my referring him to Mr. Wilberforce's Life, on the occasion of a trial at the Old Bailey arising out of the slave-trade. In his Diary he says, "Paid Williams's bill for expenses of Dowlin and Devereux's trial, 200*l.*;" and afterwards, "Paid remainder of Williams's bill, *unfairly coming upon me, 500*l.**" Here then is a bill for one *single trial*, amounting to 700*l.*, which Mr. Wilberforce had to pay; and we find him complaining of its *coming unfairly upon him*. Would even Mr. Wilberforce, though a rich man, have been degraded had he allowed others to participate in this expense? I think he would not. On my speaking of the unfairness of his being permitted to defray the whole of the expense, to one of his most confidential friends; he replied, "Do not make yourself uneasy about it; it is the intention of some of his friends, whom you know, to reimburse him." Whether he, in fact, accepted of this reimbursement, I cannot tell. Now this, which, in *one* instance, occurred to Mr. Wilberforce, occurred to me repeatedly. The very business I had undertaken naturally exposed me to such liabilities. I, therefore, accepted of the money so raised by Mr. Wilberforce with no degrading sense of obligation. I look back upon the transaction with pleasure, as one in which Mr. Wilberforce acted with his usual delicacy and gentlemanly kindness; at the same time I am not

insensible of the intended insult in its needless introduction in the Life of Mr. Wilberforce ; needless, certainly, as respects the illustration of his character ; though it may have been thought useful by these biographers as assisting their determination to represent me as a *paid* or *rewarded agent*. That there may be no misapprehension on such a subject, I affirm solemnly, that I, neither on this, nor on any other occasion, received either payment or reward for any labour or service in this cause. My character would not have suffered if I had ; but, though not rich, I was independent.

But I not only received this money, as the biographers state,—they also wish it to be believed, that I obtained it by means of importunate applications ; and for this purpose they make an extract from a letter of mine to Mr. Wilberforce, in which I name certain persons whom I suggest he should apply to ; and, in order to fix the reader's attention to this letter, intimations are made, in more than one part of the book, of *sorrow* at the *necessity* of making known what they would have their readers to suppose so discreditable to me. Happily for me, all they write themselves is *contradicted* by what they extract from *their father's letter* to Lord Muncaster. So far was I from taking any active part in the raising of this money, that Mr. Wilberforce, having determined on the sum, had planned that it should be raised without my knowledge, and that I should never know by

whom the money was contributed; and he intimates, in the very account published by the biographers, his disappointment that this his "fine scheme" was spoiled by my interference. How it reached my ear, I do not now recollect. But it having been made known to me, I wrote to him on the subject. The sum was fixed, and I knew that in some way or other the money would be forthcoming; and my suggestions to Mr. Wilberforce (knowing how many subjects *always occupied* his mind, which served to distract it) were in relief of his labour, and to expedite the business, as I certainly did wish to have it settled before I left London.*

* Justice to Mr. W. and his sons alike requires me to notice parts of the narrative which it did not concern Mr. C. to advert to. The biographers thus introduce the subject: "Nor was it only by the violence of his opponents that his patience was tried. Many were the sources of annoyance which this cause furnished its leader. Thus, in the course of this spring [1794], he had determined, by a subscription among the adherents of the abolition, to reimburse Mr. Clarkson, &c." "*The conduct of such a business must, under any circumstances, have proved distasteful to him.*" So think the sons of Mr. W. Now I had not the honour of knowing that excellent person; but in my ignorance I should have supposed that the originating such an act, whether it were of strict or liberal justice, would have been one of the most gratifying acts of his life; and the conduct of it not distasteful, but heart-cheering. One other little incident Mr. C. has omitted, but which appears in the "Life." Mr. W. wished to buy an annuity for C.: he could have but one reason for this. He probably saw so much of generous imprudence and disinterested benevolence in his friend, that he thought him not to be trusted with the restoration of his little lavished capital; but ought rather to be disabled from the repetition of such im-

Another money transaction is of a more complex character, of which the details are not fresh in my memory. The biographers are able to make what use they please of my letters, as well as of Mr. Wilberforce's Diary, and I have no documents to assist me. All the journeys which I made in England were at my own suggestion, and I exercised my own unaided discretion. The journey to France was undertaken at Mr. Wilberforce's suggestion; and, as the expenses likely to be incurred in it were of an extraordinary kind, Mr. Wilberforce very kindly intimated that I might draw upon him *if I found it necessary*. Now the biographers intimate, and I have no doubt believe, that their father

prudences. Mr. C., however, was then about to marry, and, therefore, that suggestion could not be carried into effect. But then there are the importunate, the indelicate letters, about which so much lamentation is raised, which amount only to this. A will subscribe if you ask him. Do not let B leave town till you have asked. To all this I have one simple and conclusive answer: Mr. C. did not on this occasion use language a whit more pressing and urgent than he was in the constant habit of using for common acquaintance or mere strangers, whenever he was satisfied that they had just claims on the rich. His whole life had been before, and has been since, devoted to services of beneficence and philanthropy. In a word, he might have belonged to the family of the importunate widow. The very turn of mind which permitted him to write this letter, was that which enabled him to conceive and execute his project. The utmost that he can be blamed for is that, accustomed as he was to interest himself for others, he on this occasion acted towards himself as if he were another. It was, principally, because I was anxious to bear this testimony, that I solicited permission to be the editor of this pamphlet.

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paid the whole of the expenses of this journey. They first copy an extract from Mr. Wilberforce's papers, in these words, — "Settled with Clarkson about going to France." They then state, that "on the seventh of August, having received from Mr. Wilberforce a written copy of *directions*, and been *provided* with a French companion to act as secretary and interpreter, Mr. Clarkson set out for Paris." (Vol. i. pp. 328, 329.) They thus seem to intimate that Mr. Wilberforce's settling with me "about going to France" was a money transaction, and that the Frenchman who was to accompany me was *provided* at Mr. Wilberforce's *expense*. Neither of these suggestions is correct. The settlement with me related only to instructions and advice, and giving me letters of introduction to some persons in Paris. Mr. Wilberforce, indeed, engaged for me the services of a German, who could speak French, of the name of La Plume, not as a companion or secretary, but as "*homme utile*." He was in fact a courier, and occasionally employed by the government; which circumstance brought upon me, besides paying his wages, which were extravagant enough, the additional expense of sending him back to England three weeks before I left Paris myself, he being wanted at home.

The biographers afterwards state, that I corresponded with Mr. Wilberforce, and received from him in return, "the *directions* and *supplies* which the cause required:" and as they find in my letters to Mr. Wilberforce, different sums of money mentioned, they put these odds and ends together with

the so often intimated object in view, to misrepresent my station. I cannot, at the distance of forty-nine years, recollect any thing about these specific sums; but my conviction is, that the committee paid more than three fourths of the whole sum expended, and that Mr. Wilberforce paid about 100*l.* A part of these expenses was also borne by myself. I cannot recollect the exact sum; but I know that I set out with my own money, and did not draw either on the committee or Mr. Wilberforce till that was exhausted. When I arrived in Paris, I found my labours great, and my expenses heavy; not merely such as might fall on a *subordinate and hired agent*, but such as naturally fell upon me as *a member and the representative of the London Committee*. I had, as such, to subscribe to the Society of the *Amis des Noirs*, and to the committee of the deputies of the people of colour. I had to print, and to distribute *gratis*, pamphlets on the slave-trade. The biographers state, also, that I wrote an account of my daily proceedings to Mr. Wilberforce. This is true; but I wrote in like manner, an equally detailed account of them to the late Mr. Samuel Hoare, which I was *more especially bound to do*, as he was the acting chairman of our committee. If the biographers had published the *whole*, instead of *parts of my letters* relating to the sums of money named in them, I have no doubt that they would have brought many circumstances to my recollection, which would have enabled me to throw clearer light upon this expenditure than I can do at present.

As appertaining to the same kind of dishonourable conduct—the *printing of private letters*,—I will notice a passage, quoted as from a letter of mine to Mr. Wilberforce, in which *I reproach* him for not having effectually supported my brother's application to Lord Chatham for promotion in the navy. Now, although this letter is written in a tone which I never could have adopted but in a moment of great irritation (and I was suffering at the time under a disease which, above all others, produces irritable feelings), I cannot see any thing in it, except the manner in which it is expressed, with which to reproach myself, nor can I wish it unwritten. I certainly thought myself then, and probably was, in fact, justified in all I said of Lord Chatham. It was unbecoming, I own, to address Mr. Wilberforce as I did; but I wonder that it did not occur to his sons *that such language from me to their father* does not favour the character they wish to impose upon me of the *subordinate*, the *hireling*, or the *remunerated servant*. But the extract from my letter was merely given by the biographers for the purpose of introducing the supposed answer of Mr. Wilberforce, which is indeed a most beautiful letter, and one of the best specimens of his writing in the "Life;" but I have no recollection of having received it *as there printed*, though I know that he wrote to me to the same general effect.*

* So recently as the 12th of this month, the packet of letters lent to the Messrs. W. in 1834, was remitted to Mr. Clarkson's order in town. Instead of forwarding it to Mr. C., I have ven-

One other *irrelevant* topic I will dismiss in a few sentences. I know not why there has been any

tured to make use of the letters on my own responsibility. One portion of them throws a very strong light on the conduct of the Messrs. W. in publishing those other confidential letters. If there be any person of honourable character and gentlemanly feeling beyond the limited circle of the Messrs. W.'s personal connections, who yet doubt how such conduct should be appreciated, such doubt will be removed by the facts which these letters disclose. The reader must bear in mind that the publication is justified (*Life*, vol. ii. p. 38.), as showing how the conduct of the abolition question involved Mr. W. in unpleasant correspondence; as showing how he was obliged to disappoint the expectations of those who had rendered assistance to the cause. "A single instance," they say, "illustrates his command of temper in such circumstances." Now, all this being recollected, the reader will feel some surprise when he learns that this packet, so coming out of the hands of the Messrs. W., contains eleven letters addressed to Lieutenant Clarkson, the gentleman in behalf of whom the application was made. These are written in such terms of affectionate familiarity, that six of the eleven are addressed, *My dear Admiral*; three, *My dear John*; two only, *My dear Sir*; but to these the epithet *affectionate* is applied at the close. They are full of warm praise, and express high regard. I can afford space for only two extracts, but they will decide the question how far Mr. C. was warranted in pressing his application. Mr. W. writes, 28th December, 1791,—“I cannot help adding, though, were I silent on this head, I trust you would take it for granted, that *if I have any opportunity of serving you in the line of your profession, I shall be truly happy to embrace it.*” John Clarkson being Lieutenant, R. N.,—Mr. W. being the bosom friend of the prime minister, who was brother to the First Lord of the Admiralty!!! But the other extract is still stronger. He writes, 30th April, 1793,—“I trust you do me the justice to believe me your affectionate friend,—such I hope I shall always approve myself; *and what I would do in the case of a brother or any near relation, that I would do*

allusion made to my political opinions. In one way only could they have been properly alluded to, and that is, as proving that Mr. Wilberforce did not suffer his strong political feelings to interfere with private friendship. He was the intimate friend of Mr. Pitt; I was attached to the old opposition, which from the first opposed the Revolution-war. I took the liberty, as the "Life" shows, to remon-

in yours." Satirists and men of the world tell us that such language means nothing when it flows from the tongue or pen of courtiers; I will not believe, however, that Mr. W. belonged to such a class. I was at first willing to believe that, after all, Mr. Wilberforce's reproofing letter was never sent as written, and therefore hazarded this charitable conjecture, — that in good time he recollected how he had promised to his young friend the admiral and *quasi*-brother, and in such terms as to warrant any warmth of solicitation: that he, therefore, threw it aside unsend; but that, being an able exposition of the topic, he kept it by him as a form to be used on a more fitting occasion. The *sent* letter could not be in Mr. W.'s repository. And the letter itself suggests why he would not copy it, or show it to another: — "I cannot argue the point with you at length; I have not leisure for this, and still less have I eye-sight, for I need not say *this is a letter wherein I cannot employ my amanuensis.*" And why not? Because he could not endure that even his confidential servant should know him to be capable of writing harshly to one he so much respected. But Mr. C.'s statement renders it probable that the letter was actually sent; I must however express my surprise that, with such a passage in the letter, his sons ventured to publish it to the whole world, needlessly inserting Mr. C.'s name after a *condonation* of nearly forty years' continuance, and uninterrupted cordial intercourse to the time of the writer's death.

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strate with him, too freely perhaps even for a friend — certainly *not in the tone of a dependant or an agent*—for what I thought his subserviency to the ministry. He took no offence at this, and this did him honour.

Having now despatched these purely extraneous and irrelevant matters, it is incumbent on me to show how the Messrs. Wilberforce have altogether misrepresented the relation of Mr. Wilberforce towards me, and not to me alone, but also towards our committee. I have hitherto remarked only on the biographers' studious concealment of my being even a member of the committee. Speaking of that committee (vol. i. p. 152.), they say, "*As their agent, Mr. Clarkson, sought patiently for evidence.*" The application of such a term to me fills me with astonishment, and even with indignation, because I cannot excuse these gentlemen *on the ground of mere ignorance*, having communicated to them the ample testimonies of Mr. William Smith and Archdeacon Corbett. They have also *in their possession the minutes of the committee*, — the five volumes which they procured from me through Mr. Fowell Buxton. Whoever inspects these books will find conclusive evidence how erroneous such a term is. At the *very commencement of the first volume*, it will be found that *my name* is enrolled, with the names of eleven other gentlemen then present, *as a member of the committee*, and in looking through the volumes, it will be seen that, in successive meetings, *my name appears as having sat at their board*,

notwithstanding my numerous journeys and long absences from London. How, with such documents before their eyes, they could have so misrepresented my station, will be a question with every serious reader.

If the hostile feeling towards me, and the purpose of degrading me, had not been rendered so manifest, I might have considered this use of the word *agent* as arising out of the same flagrant ignorance which has occasioned these gentlemen to represent *even the committee* as *the agents* of Mr. Wilberforce. That committee would have been formed as it was, and would have done what it did, had Mr. Wilberforce never existed; they would have found out some other parliamentary leader, though I am sure they could not possibly have found in the then House of Commons any man so well qualified to take the lead, and conduct the parliamentary proceedings, as Mr. Wilberforce. It was not, to the best of my recollection, till three or four years after the formation of the committee, that Mr. Wilberforce became a member of it. To obviate the inference so manifest from this fact, the biographers say, "It was long, indeed, before his (Mr. Wilberforce's) name was enrolled among their number (that is, among the London Committee), because his exertions promised to be more effectual by his being independent of them, but *from the very first he directed all their endeavours.*" (Vol. i. p. 152.) This statement I peremptorily deny. Mr. Wilberforce was an entire stranger to every one of

the gentlemen whom I successively enlisted into the service, at the time when we constituted ourselves a committee, except, perhaps, Mr. Granville Sharp.

The Messrs. Wilberforce are young men, and this part of their misrepresentation is perhaps to be ascribed to their ignorance of the nature of the business which the committee proposed to themselves to do; I will give a summary of this, which will instruct them, at the same time that it will point out clearly the relation in which we stood to their father, and show the utter impossibility of his having directed our proceedings in the way they assert. We proposed, then, first, to collect a body of evidence. This department I undertook. My History records the numerous and perilous journeys which I took in the fulfilment of it. These journeys were all planned by myself. I travelled 35,000 miles, mostly by night. The biographers are pleased to say that I did this as *agent of the committee*. They might as well have called me their traveller or bag-man. The second department proposed, was a correspondence to be kept up throughout the kingdom; and, as the Messrs. Wilberforce must have seen in my History, that I maintained a correspondence for seven years with four hundred persons, with my own hands, I am surprised they did not call me the committee's clerk. The third, which may be called the literary and controversial branch, comprehended the composition of pamphlets, the writings in newspapers, &c.; and these two latter means had the common object, to spread

knowledge, diffuse a sense of the iniquity and cruelty of the slave trade, and obtain petitions to the houses of parliament. In these, also, I actually participated. But it must not be supposed that I alone could perform the whole of this laborious duty. This was to be distributed among the members of sub-committees and a salaried secretary was to be employed. The fourth, of the means to be used, and that of the very greatest importance, was the choice of a parliamentary leader. My History relates the circumstances attending the invitation to Mr. Wilberforce to become such, and his acceptance of the arduous and honourable office. The dinner at Mr. Langton's for that purpose, was concerted by that gentleman and me, for I had promised my friends, who were to be members of the committee, that I would make known their wishes to Mr. Wilberforce. Accordingly, before I left the company, I took Mr. Wilberforce aside, and asked him if I might mention this his resolution to my friends in the city, of whom he had so often heard me speak, as desirous of aiding him, by becoming a committee for the purpose. He replied that "I might." (History of Abolition, vol. i p. 254.) The next day I carried the joyful news to my friends, and thus the machinery, which *had already been invented and prepared*, was immediately put in motion. Now, as Mr. Wilberforce took no part, either in the formation of the committee, or for a considerable time in any of three great means which, as I have stated, were determined and acted upon by the committee, and as the committee in

these respects stood in no relation to him, surely it must be obvious that it could not be *as agents* of Mr. Wilberforce, or *under his directions*, that they thus entered upon, and performed the important duties which they had imposed upon themselves. The machinery, consisting of the three kinds or classes of proceeding I have above enumerated, had been invented and set in motion, to the best of my recollection, about three years before Mr. Wilberforce was a member of the committee, so that there was nothing left for him to direct but his own parliamentary proceedings.

These, of course, Mr. Wilberforce did in a certain sense direct, but in the way of authority he never thought of directing any thing. As the parliamentary leader, nothing of importance could be brought forward without his approbation; and, during the parliamentary inquiries, numerous and incessant were my conferences with him, as is usual in all such proceedings.* But let me not be

* This point admits of a clearer elucidation. Mr. R. Wilberforce in his letter of the 18th of July, 1834, complains of Mr. C. having represented Mr. W. as a sort of parliamentary agent, of whom C. availed himself. Now this complaint I am willing to ascribe in part to Mr. R. W.'s unacquaintance with public business. The narrative which this note interrupts (which is merely that of the history), states the relation of W. to the committee as it was and could not but be. The truth is, that the chairman of a parliamentary committee, such as W. was during the long and laborious inquiries into the Slave Trade, stands pretty much in the relation of a leading counsel in the conduct of a cause at its trial. He directs what course shall be taken, and assumes a sort of authority, but no one therefore thinks

misunderstood. Mr. Wilberforce was not merely the bringer forward in parliament of what had been elsewhere resolved upon; he was also latterly one of the committee, and was always our associate in heart and soul; and, in the way of counsel, went beyond such interference, as his leadership in the House of Commons would have required; as I have stated with respect to the journey to France in 1789, which was his suggestion. All this, I trust, sufficiently appears in my History. There is no part of the "Life," which has wounded me so much as the implied, rather than the ex-

the attorney, or still less the client, to be the agent of the counsel. The relation is in fact the reverse. The counsel is a *sort of agent* to the client, though never called so, as that term implies inferiority and subserviency. And so in a certain sense, a member of parliament, who is placed at the head of great legislative measures on behalf of classes of persons, is a sort of agent, though of the most honourable kind. Such is at the present moment Mr. O'Connell for the Irish Catholics, and Mr. Gladstone for the West Indian colonists. Precisely such was Mr. Wilberforce for the Negro race. No complex business, involving the interests of great bodies, can be carried through parliament without the intervention of an out-of-doors committee as well as a committee of the House. Mr. C.'s history shows how, during the long and laborious investigation of the Slave Trade question, he was the *copula* (so to speak) connecting the committee of the society which he represented with that of the House. And filling this most important office, being the centre of every movement, he could not but speak of his own doings; hence, in part, the really insignificant charge of egotism brought against his book. What immediately follows in the text above shows that he never meant to undervalue or to detract from the services of W.

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pressed, charge, that I had not done justice to Mr. Wilberforce ; that I was insensible to his high worth, and grudgingly acknowledged it. The extracts from my book, copied into my letter to Mr. Robert Wilberforce, sufficiently prove the contrary. In my work he appears as *the parliamentary leader, as the head* ; but the Messrs. Wilberforces would represent him *as the body* also. They consider the committee *as his agents*, not remembering that Mr. Granville Sharp, a gentleman of fortune and high character, was our chairman ; and not knowing, perhaps, that Samuel Hoare, William Dillwyn, and others, were by their talents, their knowledge of business and mankind, as well as by the integrity of their lives, qualified to take the lead in, and to do honour to, any cause to which they lent their aid ; neither were these gentlemen, as far as independence and station went, lower than their father, except that they were not in parliament, and that Mr. Wilberforce was the representative of the largest county in England. The biographers would represent Mr. Wilberforce as the founder of the society, and originator of the great movement which enabled him to effect the Abolition. But this he never thought himself, nor any one before them. He was, what I have ever represented him to be, our head, and our parliamentary leader, in which high station *he did all that man could do, and more than scarcely any other could have done*. All this I have shown, and as the biographers state him to

have acknowledged, "to his entire satisfaction." Indeed, at the same time that they manifest their own contempt of me, and keep me out of sight in the course of their writing as much as possible, they could not help letting out, by way of quotation, expressions of their father's regard for me, which militate marvellously with their own opinions. The letter, for instance, written upon the occasion of my journey to Aix-la-Chapelle, contains expressions of eulogy concerning me, which I myself should not have thought proper to publish to the world.* The truth is, that I enjoyed the good opinion and the friendship of Mr. Wilberforce *to the end of his life*. His sons, being young men, have seen little of me, for I lived during the last twenty-five years of his life in the

* "Clarkson seems formed by Providence for the purpose." "He is the only man that could go and carry our representations, who might be suffered to go of his own impulse, and not deputed by us. Then he will be more acceptable than most to the Emperor Alexander, and we may depend on his being in earnest." "He would be regarded as half Quaker, and may do eccentric things with less offence than you or I could." Mr. W. having made a judicious remark, that "Lord Castlereagh in his public character might be unable, without a violation of diplomatic propriety, to do what might be very usefully done by a *nemo*, who should apply his lever to the great Alexander," the biographers add, "But the Emperor could not be moved by the lever of the '*nemo*,'—and Mr. Clarkson only gained from Alexander an audience of 'an hour and a half,' with an assurance that 'he entirely enters into our views.'" The opportunity thus afforded the biographers of concluding with a sneer, probably reconciled them to the introducing Mr. C.'s name in a connection after all, and in spite of the sneer, so honourable.

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county of Suffolk, and was therefore separate from him, but I saw him occasionally, and he corresponded with me *at intervals during all this time*, almost always either *on the subject of Slavery, or the Slave Trade, and on our former labours*. When any thing new, or striking, or *difficult* occurred that was connected with Africa or the colonies, he was accustomed to *write to me to consult me*, generally giving me his own opinion first, and then asking mine. In his letters he showed a warmth of friendship for me amounting to affection. He showed an interest not only in the welfare of all my family, but would give me an account of his own, not simply how they were, but where they were, and what they were doing, and what he meant to do with some of his children, thus *putting me on a footing with one of his most intimate friends*. All this I could have shown in many letters, but the greater number have been destroyed. Happily for me four have been preserved, which will justify all that I have just said; and which seem to have been providentially preserved, as if to rise up in condemnation of the unjust conduct of his sons towards me.

The first letter is dated October 31st, 1821. It is headed, "Private and confidential."

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I should have written to you, I believe, sometime ago, to the effect of this letter, but for my want both of time and eyesight, and for the ne-

cessity of using my own pen in addressing you. First, let me suggest to you, *with the friendly freedom with which we ought to advise each other on our common cause*, that it would be well if you would privately write to the Emperor of Russia, urging him to use his utmost efforts in our behalf, more especially with the French government; *entre nous*, I myself have lately written to him a private letter, and I am now at work on another letter to him, which I think of publishing. Your application might tend to produce that impression on his conscience, which would prompt him to consider himself as not at liberty to abstain from every possible endeavour by which he might render such a service to his fellow-creatures."

Mr. Wilberforce then enters upon a subject which is of much too delicate a nature to be alluded to here. I am sorry for it, as it shows his character in a most interesting point of view. I will, however, give the words with which he concludes this part of his letter. "I shall be thankful for any intelligence with which you may favour me, and I solemnly promise to you to observe with perfect strictness any obligations of secrecy you may impose on me." I ask whether these extracts do not prove that I stood in a very different relation both to Mr. Wilberforce and *the cause*, from that in which his sons so contemptuously endeavour to represent me to the readers of their volumes.

The second letter is dated the 24th of December, 1824. I shall not give it entire lest — though in

my opinion it reflects honour on the excellent person principally concerned—I should wound the feelings of any one in referring to a by-gone transaction now nearly forgotten. I will, therefore, merely say, that this distinguished friend of Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Stephen, being urged by them to pursue a course which they deemed advisable, but to which his own delicate sense of honour was repugnant, Mr. Wilberforce writes:—

“ My friend, Mr. Stephen, conceives, however, that it may tend to prevent” (the proposed proceeding) “ being misconstrued, if a few of *the chief friends of the cause* should sanction the propriety of his conduct in so doing. I doubt not you concur with me in thinking that” (the outrage this gentleman had to endure) “ has been occasioned by his standing forward in our cause; and that, therefore, you will also think with me that his character ought to be protected, as far as we are able to vindicate it, from unjust aspersions.” Thus much is written in another hand, and therefore perhaps is little more than a circular, but the more important part that follows is in Mr. Wilberforce’s own writing. “ If you agree with me in this sentiment, may I request you to subscribe your name to the enclosed paper, to which I have willingly put my own. *On the value of your signature I should dilate, if I were writing to any one else.* To you I will only add, begging Mrs. Wilberforce’s and my own kind remembrances to Mrs. Clarkson, that I

am ever, with cordial respect, esteem, and regard,
your attached friend,

“ W. WILBERFORCE.

“ I hope you have had good accounts of John,
your brother ; and let me not conclude without
obeying the good old custom of wishing you and
yours at this season a long course of comfort and
usefulness.

Ever yours,

“ W. W.” *

* In the returned packet referred to in a former note, were five letters addressed to Mr. Clarkson. Three call for no especial remark, except that Mr. W. never fails to express his *cordial esteem and regard*, feelings which could have no place in his heart, if his sons have inherited his affections with his property. Two are remarkable for the shrewd sound sense of the writer, and I believe would have appeared in the life, but for the superscription. From one dated, 19th January, 1826, I extract the introductory sentence as further illustrative of the *candour* with which the biographers bring forward Mr. Clarkson as an *example* and *instance* of persons annoying Mr. W. by impertinent and unwarrantable solicitation. “ No man living can have a stronger claim than yourself to any service I can render in any cause of a benevolent nature, because no man has laboured with such unabated energy.” To prevent a misapprehension, I add that this application does not appear to have respected Mr. C. or any personal connection. “ I am glad to find you are able (your willingness ! I had no fear of its not holding out to the last) to continue your exertions on the scale you do.”

He wrote another letter on the 27th March, 1826, full of very interesting and confidential opinions on the great measure of emancipation then before parliament. Mr. C. had been among the first to rouse the nation to a sense of the iniquity of suffering Slavery to remain, as he was among the first forty-one years before to excite the public to a just sense of the horrors of the Slave Trade. At the close of his letter Mr. W. thus solemnly records his sense of Mr. Clarkson's recent services :—

The third letter was written on the occasion of the mission of a Mr. Elliot Cresson to this country, to solicit subscriptions in aid of the American Colonisation Society. I annex the letter, to show the

"I congratulate you on the success of your endeavours to call the public voice into action. It is that which has so greatly improved our general credit in the House of Commons, FOR IT IS YOUR DOING, UNDER PROVIDENCE."

It occurred to me, on casting my eye over these repeated expressions of cordial affection, to ask myself, but not in doubt, Is it possible that, after all, these are but words of course, and that Mr. W. did in reality nourish feelings of secret disesteem and resentment at an imagined depreciation of himself? The Quarterly reviewer, in his masterly article, in which pungency of talent is not weakened by the infusion of a very copious portion of indulgence and kindness, remarks that the life is a sort of autobiography. If so, it may be thought by some that the authors, in thus seeking to dissociate the name of Clarkson from that of Wilberforce, except in the relation of dependency and subserviency, may be executing a secret trust, discharging an office of filial duty, offering a sacrifice to the manes of their parent. We may be told hereafter: Our father charged us to bide our time. He bore with Mr. C. forty years for the sake of the cause, and admonished us to do the same, if necessary. "Clarkson's services," he said, "are for the present indispensable. He has besides with him a party in the country—the Quakers and Dissenters, nearly to a man; you must not break with him till he is no longer wanted. But when once the African cause is out of jeopardy, when emancipation is secured, then you may redress my wrongs." I would not suffer this sentence to remain, if I thought a single man could read it through without perceiving, that I pen it merely to suggest the dilemma in which the biographers are placed. Either this is a correct imagination—then they fix on their father's memory the reproach of *consummate hypocrisy*; or the contrary is true—and then their father must be considered as in spirit mourning over and condemning their conduct.

H. C. R.

tone in which Mr. Wilberforce corresponded with me. The letter may incidentally interest some readers, as showing Mr. Wilberforce's then opinion of the society just mentioned.

“ Bath, October 10. 1831.

No. 9, North Parade.

“ MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

“I sincerely regret the delay that has taken place in my receiving your letter, from my having been unable to foresee my own movements (Oct. 17th); and now I regret still more that your friendly communication, when it did reach me, should have waited so long for a reply. I ought to have submitted, as you did, to the necessity of using another pen; but I dislike dictating so much, except it be letters of business, that I could not but earnestly desire to write to you with my own hand; and though I have been day after day, since I commenced my letter on the 10th instant, looking out eagerly for an interval of which I could avail myself, I could not succeed. I never remember having had on my hands half the business (urgent and important business too), while at Bath, that has occupied me since my late arrival at Bath. I rejoice, however, in having taken the precaution (suggested by my fearing he* might have left his London quarters, if I delayed his receipt of my acceptance of his kind offer, by sending it through you) of informing him immediately that I should be happy to see him at this place. Here, accordingly, he betook himself,

* Mr. Elliot Cresson.

and we have been for several days talking over the subject of his mission. And though he found me so much preoccupied, I have forced all other topics, that would bear being deferred, to give way to this. I will frankly own that, at first, I could not but impute, at least in some degree, Cresson's utterly despairing of being able to raise the slaves in the United States to the level of free citizens in their own country to some measure of anti-negro prejudice; yet, on more reflection, I see much force in his reasonings on that head, and I see in the plan many and great benefits that would result from the success of his endeavours.

But, my friend, do you not use hyperbolic language when you speak of half a million of slaves being sent back to Africa without cost? Seven pounds, ten shillings, is the sum he names for each negro's being planted in Liberia and having thirty acres of land. When I had proceeded thus far, I was compelled to go to the pump-room, and I have been detained so long as to leave me no time to finish my letter. I will try to resume my pen within two or three days, though I am still extremely engaged by business of a very urgent nature. Meanwhile let me beg my kind remembrances to Mrs. C., &c., and assure you of the cordial and high respect and attachment with which I am,

“ My dear Friend, ever sincerely
and affectionately yours,

“ W. WILBERFORCE.”

The last letter was written *but four months before* Mr. Wilberforce's death. I give it entire. There is one passage in it relating to his loss of fortune, which I once thought of suppressing; but as his sons have made the case public in their work, I am no longer restrained by delicacy from publishing it; and I gladly do so, as it shows Mr. Wilberforce to have been as much a Christian under adversity, as he was in prosperity.

“ East Farleigh, Maidstone,
18th March, 1833.

“ MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

“ I am unaffectedly vexed by the idea of having treated you unkindly; and yet I may confidently deny the charge, because I can truly declare that *all my intentions and feelings* have been *directly of the opposite character*. But I have been delaying to take up the pen day after day, owing to my not having been able to form any satisfactory conclusion as to the best course of conduct to be pursued. Meanwhile, every morning has brought its own claim of occupation; and though I have been continually thinking of making inquiries, &c., no positive determination has been made. At length, one thing is clear, that I ought not to suffer so friendly as well as so well-considered a letter to remain altogether unacknowledged. I am all but absolutely decided to make some inquiry at Liverpool of my friend Mr. Adam Hodgson; and, though I have never been in the habit of writing to our

friend Mr. Cropper, yet, finding from your letter that he has turned his mind so much to the subject, I cannot but be desirous of obtaining the result of his inquiries. Meanwhile, I certainly ought to return you thanks for your friendly communication; and I am rather inclined to believe, that it may be advisable *for us both* to provide against it being hereafter *imputed to us**, that we had *suffered ourselves* to be drawn into the support of a plan which, with whatever fair professions introduced, had been in fact perverted into an engine for effecting purposes directly opposite to those just and beneficial objects which its first promoters had in view. When I shall have obtained more complete information, I will have the pleasure of writing to you again. I am sorry to hear of the deprivation you have experienced; and heartily wish that it may please God to render the projected operation the means of restoring to you the use of your eyesight. It may be a comfort to you to be told, that I have been assured that it is by no means so painful an one as from the tenderness of the organ we should have been likely to anticipate. It may be a just subject for thankfulness that, while you did enjoy your eyesight, you were enabled to turn it to such good account. I must beg of you to let me know the result of the operation, if you do submit to it. To your kind inquiries, I am thankful to be able to

* Here he identifies me with himself, and both of us with the cause, as the two responsible for its reputation.

return a very satisfactory reply. Mrs. Wilberforce and I are both enjoying very comfortable, if not robust, health. We have been for four months past established with our son Robert and his lady at his vicarage; perhaps you know that it was given him very handsomely and kindly by Lord Brougham, quite unsolicitedly. Samuel, my third son, has a living in the Isle of Wight, given him as spontaneously by the Bishop of Winchester; and with him and his lady we hope to spend a part of every year. He has a nice little girl. We have two other grandchildren; my eldest son's only child, a boy of eleven, and our dear daughter left a little girl. I do not know whether you may have heard of a very heavy pecuniary loss, though perhaps I may have mentioned it to you before, which rendered it necessary for me greatly to lessen my expenditure, and with that view to give up my establishment and family residence; I cannot, however, but recognise in the circumstances of this incident the gracious providence of God in deferring it until Mrs. Wilberforce and I were enabled to find so gratifying a refuge under the roofs of our dear children. My youngest son Henry is about to enter into orders; I need not say, entirely by his own preference: and now I will only beg you present Mrs. Wilberforce's and my kind remembrances to Mrs. Clarkson, whose recovery will, I hope, be progressively complete. We are both glad to hear your son is settled to your satisfaction, and feel every good wish for him and his also.

“ I scarcely need tell you that I use Mrs. Wilberforce’s pen on account of the weakness of my eyes, which happen just now to be worse than usual.

“ Ever affectionately yours.”

I shall not add a word to this letter. It records the *last private* expression of feeling, as the report of the meeting at the Freemason’s Tavern records *the last public expression* of his opinion concerning me. The recollection of this feeling, and of this opinion, sufficiently consoles me under the indignities cast on me by his sons. I appeal with satisfaction from the judgment of the living Robert and Samuel Wilberforce to the recorded sentiments of the deceased William Wilberforce.

SUPPLEMENT.

I.

**REMARKS ON THE EDINBURGH REVIEW OF
MR. WILBERFORCE'S LIFE.**

II.

**ON THE MINUTE BOOKS OF THE ABOLITION
SOCIETY.**

SUPPLEMENT.

I.

REMARKS ON THE EDINBURGH REVIEW OF MR. WILBERFORCE'S LIFE.

THE attack upon the character of Mr. Clarkson in the Edinburgh Review of the Life of Mr. Wilberforce, excited equal sorrow and surprise among, not only the many personal friends of Mr. Clarkson, but also the still more numerous friends of the African race; the elder abolitionists as well as the younger emancipationists. The names of Wilberforce and Clarkson had never before been arrayed against each other; and it was painful to behold in one writing an enthusiastic eulogy on Mr. Wilberforce, and an elaborate depreciation of Mr. Clarkson. This impression was heightened by this circumstance, that the vehicle of the attack was the very Review from which, thirty years ago, the History of the Abolition received the most flattering notice, and which then expressed no other feelings than those of "gratitude and veneration to Mr. Clarkson." It is true that great changes, both in reviews and men, take place in the course of thirty years, but there will not be found, probably, a syllable of disrespect towards Mr. Clarkson in that journal from that till the present time. An extraordinary circumstance accompanied the publication of the review.

The review appeared some weeks before the book reviewed. Now this is no unusual occurrence when the author and his reviewer are in the interests of the same publisher; but when a work about to issue from Albemarle Street, London, is reviewed by anticipation in the Edin-

burgh Review, the inference is irresistible, that it is the manuscript, not the printed book, that is reviewed. The contents of the article fully warranted the conjecture. As far as Mr. Clarkson is concerned, it is a regular *plaidoyer* in favour of Mr. Wilberforce's sons; and when the *Life* did come out, the fact was still more obvious; for the review contains references to the supposed feelings of the authors, of which there is no trace in the printed book, and which could be known to the reviewers only from personal intercourse; together with reasons in justification, which, if they really influenced them, ought to have been stated by themselves. I therefore take leave to consider the review, on this internal evidence, as a sort of epitome and supplement to the *Life*: an arrow from the same quiver, though drawn by another, and, in my judgment, a stronger arm.

The Clarkson episode commences with an apology. The shrewd reviewer was well aware that some excuse was required to justify the authors' attack on their father's very old friend and associate. Mr. Wilberforce died in the profession of affectionate esteem for Mr. Clarkson; and on his death the usual interchange of courtesies of condolence took place. It was necessary, therefore, to find a provocation, a recent provocation if possible, so that it might look as if the sons of Mr. Wilberforce were forced into a discussion, and compelled to degrade Mr. Clarkson. This was not easy. It could not be found that either Mr. Clarkson or any friend of his had uttered a word in dispraise of Mr. Wilberforce: still more, the reviewer could not find that any one had *by name* spoken of Mr. Wilberforce disadvantageously in comparison with Mr. Clarkson. By some good chance, however, it reached the reviewer's ear that, in a recent book written by a gentleman equally a stranger to Mr. Clarkson and Mr. Wilberforce, there was a sentence which, though it does not name Mr. Wilberforce, might be strained into an insult to his memory.

The reviewer having stated that "*God had bestowed on him [W.] a name of imperishable glory,*" proceeds:—"There are those who have disputed his title to the station thus

“ assigned him. Among the most recent is to be
 “ numbered one whose esteem is of infinitely too high
 “ value to be lightly disregarded, and whose judgment will
 “ carry with it no common authority. Mr. Serjeant
 “ Talfourd in his Life of Charles Lamb, referring to an
 “ interview which took place between Lamb and Mr.
 “ Clarkson, uses the following expressions:—‘ There he
 “ ‘ also met with the true annihilator of the Slave Trade,
 “ ‘ Thomas Clarkson, who was then enjoying a necessary
 “ ‘ respite from his stupendous labours, in a cottage on the
 “ ‘ borders of Ulswater. Lamb had no taste for oratorical
 “ ‘ philanthropy, but he felt the grandeur and simplicity of
 “ ‘ Clarkson’s character.’” “ *It is due to the memory of
 Mr. Wilberforce to state that no man ever so little merited
 that condemnation which the language of Mr. Talfourd must
 be supposed to convey.*” To judge of the fairness of this
 inference I must complete the sentence. The Serjeant’s
 text does not put a full stop after *character*, but a comma,
 and the sentence is thus continued: . . . “ and appreciated
 “ the unexampled self-denial with which he steeled his
 “ heart, trembling with nervous sensibility, to endure
 “ intimate acquaintance with the foulest details of guilt and
 “ wickedness which he ~~loved~~ and could have died to
 “ abolish.” Had the whole of this been printed, it would
 have been still more manifest that the author meant to
 contrast such painful personal labours as Clarkson under-
 went, with idle tavern speech-making, fighting for a cause
 after it is won, when nothing is done besides speech-making
 for applause. I am authorised by the Serjeant to say that
 he meant no such condemnation of Mr. Wilberforce, nor
 any allusion to him. This is the extent of his assurance
 to me. The construction I have given to his whole
 sentence is my own. I consider the interpretation of his
 words by the reviewer, as very unjust to the Serjeant him-
 self; for though he is too young to have any recollection of
 the discussions which preceded the abolition; yet he
 knows at least this, that Mr. Wilberforce had for many
 years the conduct of this great business: he is himself

an able man of business, and knows that the labours which are imposed on a leader in parliament who is opposed by a powerful party, and has all the committee-business resting upon him, are not to be characterised by such terms as oratorical philanthropy. This is an auspicious beginning.

“The contrast which is thus drawn between the true annihilator of the slave trade, and the oratorical philanthropists who declaimed against it, does not rest merely on the authority of Mr. Talfourd. The great names of Wordsworth and Southey, with many minor writers, may be quoted in support of the same opinion.”

This being so, it is very strange that Mr. Wilberforce should, notwithstanding, have associated cordially with these poets, as the Life itself shows. I by no means regret the obligation imposed on me of showing how utterly groundless this charge against these gentlemen is, because it enables me to supply two pages which every reader of taste will enjoy. The reviewer has also essentially served Mr. Clarkson, by drawing from the great poet first named, a prompt and cordial declaration, which amply compensates for the scorn of the Messrs. Wilberforce, and by which Mr. Wordsworth has entitled himself to my thanks and the gratitude of all Mr. Clarkson's friends. It is thirty years since the sonnet was written. The note which follows, first appeared in the beautiful volume very recently published, which brings together all Mr. Wordsworth's sonnets,—those poetical gems, which are without a parallel in European, not excepting Italian, literature:—

TO THOMAS CLARKSON,

ON THE FINAL PASSING OF THE BILL FOR THE ABOLITION OF
THE SLAVE TRADE, MARCH 1807.

Clarkson! it was an obstinate hill to climb:
How toilsome — nay, how dire — it was, by thee
Is known; by none, perhaps, so feelingly:
But thou, who starting in thy fervent prime,

Didst first lead forth that enterprise sublime,
 Hast heard the constant Voice its charge repeat,
 Which, out of thy young heart's oracular seat,
 First roused thee. — O true yoke-fellow of Time,
 Duty's intrepid liegeman, see, the palm
 Is won, and by all nations shall be worn !
 The blood-stained writing is for ever torn ;
 And thou henceforth wilt have a good man's calm,
 A great man's happiness ; thy zeal shall find
 Repose at length, firm friend of human kind !

NOTE. — “ *Didst first lead forth that enterprise sublime.*”

“ This honour has, I am told, been denied to Mr. Clarkson by the sons of Mr. Wilberforce, in the account of his life lately published by them, and priority of exertion in this cause, — (public exertion, I suppose, for with private I have nothing to do) — claimed for their father. The writer of the article upon that work in the Edinburgh Review has also maintained the opinion of the biographers; and alluding to this sonnet in terms of courtesy, affirms that its author is under a mistake. Although in fact who might be first, and who might be second, where such rare and high qualities were put forth by both labourers, is of little moment; yet, in case Mr. Clarkson should not himself think it worth while to take up the matter, I shall avail myself of some future occasion, to make public the grounds of evidence upon which I first entertained, and still retain the belief that I am not in error in having spoken as I have done through every part of this humble tribute to the virtues of my honoured friend.”*

The laureat's offence consists in a stanza a part of his “ *Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo,*” published more than twenty years ago. It forms a portion of a poetical vision, an allegorical phantasmagoria. After a picture of the beautiful isles which were the scene, first of

* Mr. Wordsworth says “ he is told.” It is probable that he had heard only of the disputed claim as to priority. Otherwise I do not suppose he would have left unnoticed the express charge that he also sanctioned the idea that Mr. Wilberforce was a mere oratorical philanthropist.

Indian, and then of Negro wretchedness, there is a transformation.

53.

“ Anon, me thought that in a spacious square
 Of some great town the goodly ornament,
 Three statues I beheld, of sculpture fair :
 These, said the muse, are they whom one consent
 Shall there deem worthy of the purest fame :
 Knowest thou who best such gratitude may claim ?

54.

“ Clarkson, I answered, first ; whom to have seen
 And known in social hours may be my pride,
 Such friendship being praise ; and one, I ween,
 Is Wilberforce, placed rightly at his side,
 Whose eloquent voice in that great cause was heard
 So oft and well. — But who shall be the third ?

54.

“ Time, said my Teacher, will reveal the name
 Of him who with these worthies shall enjoy
 The equal honour of enduring fame : . . .
 He who the root of evil shall destroy,
 And from our laws shall blot the accursed word
 Of Slave, shall rightly stand with them preferred.”

I disclaim the faculty as well of interpreting visions, as of seeing them. Yet thus much I venture to say, that whatever name be destined to the high honour here assigned to it (including alike the living and the dead), it must be that of one who would not scorn either of his associates ; and to whose nature the outrage perpetrated on the character of one of them, on pretence of exalting the other, is altogether repugnant.

The Corpora delicti of the offences of the two poets are now exhibited ; I trust I shall be forgiven by them for any shame that I have been compelled to expose them to. I leave the reviewer to determine who has been most culpable : Mr. Wordsworth in composing a sonnet in honour of Mr. Clarkson in which Mr. Wilberforce's name does not appear, or Mr. Southey in presuming to place Mr. Clarkson on an equality with Mr. Wilberforce ; for, after all,

superiority is not conferred on him ; he is but *primus inter pares*. — Mr. Southey must have marvelled greatly when he found himself accused in the Edinburgh Review of *contrasting* the characters of Messrs. Wilberforce and Clarkson, because he represented them as entitled to equal honour.

The reviewer, however, could not venture to rest only on the wrongful eulogies of Wordsworth and Southey; the author himself must be brought in: therefore “ *Mr. Clarkson has claimed for himself a place in the history of this great measure, which affords no light countenance to the pretensions preferred in his behalf.*” Of course, the reader would expect that the reviewer was about to cite from Mr. Clarkson’s book, arrogant pretensions on his own behalf, if not depreciating words of Mr. Wilberforce and others. It is not so: the reviewer does not, any more than the biographers, venture one word of contradiction or animadversion upon a single sentence in the history. But there is, it seems, a sort of picture or chart prefixed to the book on which a stream or channel takes the name of Clarkson, into which the rivulet Wilberforce runs.

I deny the truth of the charge altogether ; but it is so frivolous, that I will not copy the wordy imputation, since it is not worth the expense of copying the engraving, which would be the only satisfactory answer. I will merely, in explanation, say that in the ill-executed chart it was intended to represent all the men who had concurred in the abolition as rivulets running into certain channels, there being no name given to any channel except Dillwyn, because he was the medium of communication between the American and the English abolitionists. Now the artist has put Clarkson’s name a very little nearer the channel than the rivulet, but still the invidious interpretation cannot be the just one, for in that case there would be a rivulet without a name.

Such are the *causæ belli* proclaimed in this manifesto, of which all the credit belongs to the reviewer. He says, indeed, of the last ground of complaint, “The sons of Mr.

Wilberforce complain of this hydrography." The complaint may have been uttered in the private ear of the reviewer: it is not in the *Life*. However it is on such premises that the conclusion is arrived at.

"The discussion has, we think, been inevitably forced on them, but it is one into which we decline to enter."

In imitation of the author's note about Mr. Clarkson's *History*, they also declined all controversy. *"It may be sufficient to state what are the positions which the biographers have asserted, and, as we think, substantiated. They maintain then that his" [Mr. W.'s] "attention had been directed to the abolition of the slave trade for some time before the subject had engaged Mr. Clarkson's notice."* These few words embody what may be considered the great mistake of the Messrs. Wilberforce, the confounding a matter of sentiment with a strenuous act of the will and practical resolution. When they affirm that Mr. Wilberforce's impulse to devote himself to the abolition was the fruit of his religious change (i. 140.), and deny that either Lady Middleton, or Mr. Clarkson, or that any accident led to this great event, they say what is in perfect consistency with Mr. Clarkson's *History* and the present strictures. As an affair of conscience and moral feeling, Mr. Clarkson never suggests that he in the slightest degree influenced Mr. Wilberforce; but his *History* does state, and the strictures still more pointedly maintain, that Mr. Wilberforce owed to Mr. Clarkson his more minute knowledge on the subject.

"That he had been co-operating with Mr. Pitt for the advancement of the measure long before his acquaintance with Mr. Clarkson commenced, and for at least two years before the period at which Mr. Clarkson takes to himself the credit of having made a convert of that great minister."

There is nothing in the *Life* to justify this statement; for Mr. Clarkson's narrative and that of the biographers agree in this, that the acquaintance between Messrs. Wilberforce and Clarkson began in the spring of 1787. Now the *Life* does not record any business-like, serious delibe-

ration between Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Pitt till January 1788. Nor is there a tittle of evidence to show that so early as the spring of 1785 any thing like *co-operation* could have taken place between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Wilberforce. The reviewer quite forgot that during the intermediate time the great conflict was going on between Mr. Pitt and the coalition party. It was not till Mr. Pitt was fixed in his seat as prime minister that there was leisure for an investigation which had not yet assumed importance. The nation was only beginning to be excited, chiefly by Mr. Clarkson's first work. Mr. Clarkson's History is precise on this point; it says (i. 472.) that he returned to town in May 1778. "My first business in London was to hold a conversation with Mr. Pitt previously to the meeting of the council, and to try to interest him as the first minister of the state in our favour. For this purpose Mr. Wilberforce had opened the way for me and an interview took place." . . . "We went through most branches of the subject; Mr. Pitt appeared to me to have but little knowledge of it." And Mr. Clarkson gives a detailed account of this and another conference with Mr. Pitt. It is interesting, but too long for insertion:—"He thanked me for the light I had given him on many of the branches of this great question, and I went away under a certain conviction that I had left him much impressed in its favour."

The biographers themselves are very discreet in their reference to this point:—"In this interview," says Mr. Clarkson, "I had given birth in the minister to an interest in our cause." (i. 163.) Why did they not cite the History? First, because they systematically decline citing the only book which posterity will refer to as any authority on this point—conduct altogether unexampled in literary history. There might be this further reason, that, being referred to, some reader might chance to attend to the reference, and might not concur in their suggestion, that Mr. Pitt's "apparent ignorance in Mr. Clarkson's eye was the effect perhaps of constitutional reserve." Mr. Clarkson's statement is most honourable to the Minister, whom he

represents to have investigated the subject like a sensible man of business. The biographers would represent him as too reserved not only to communicate but even to enquire. This important incident of the interviews of Mr. Clarkson with Mr. Pitt being minutely related by him in his History; I take occasion here to put the question that so often occurs,—Does it truly record the occurrence? If it do, how could Mr. Wilberforce have previously endocrinated the minister who was his bosom friend? Or how could Mr. Clarkson be the subordinate person, the mere agent of a sort of agents of Mr. Wilberforce, such as the biographers represent him? But is it to be considered as one of the numberless misstatements? Then how could Mr. Wilberforce suffer it to remain uncontradicted? I can very well comprehend why a high-minded or religious man does not condescend to complain of withheld praise; but I cannot think it compatible with either dignity or moral sense or religious feeling, to allow misstatements to remain uncontradicted: and it would be a positive dereliction of duty to profess friendship and esteem during a long life afterwards, for the man who had promulgated such falsehoods. It seems almost superfluous now to remark of the *two years before*, that is, the spring of 1785, that then, not even Mr. Clarkson himself had obtained knowledge, which he in the interval between that time and the interview with Mr. Pitt, did acquire by those laborious exertions which are recorded in his book.

“*That many of Mr. Clarkson’s exertions were undertaken at the instance and at the expense of Mr. Wilberforce, and conducted under his written instructions.*” Now instead of many, the Life itself notices only one such exertion—the journey to Paris. Mr. Clarkson has explained this transaction. Only a quarter of the expense was defrayed by Mr. Wilberforce, and a much larger by Mr. Clarkson himself, considering the great inequality of their fortune. Indeed this allusion to expense is uncandid as respects Mr. Clarkson, and also injudicious, because there is so obvious and conclusive an answer. If the sacrifices of

Mr. Clarkson, including that of his profession (church preferment being within his reach), be compared with those of such men as Lord Muncaster, Messrs. Hoare, Dillwyn, Wilberforce, W. Smith, &c. it will be found that Mr. Clarkson, like the widow with her mite, had contributed more than they all. Then the reviewer adverts to the fact which the world know from Mr. Clarkson himself, that he retired from the contest from 1794 to 1805; and says, "*Thus far there seems no ground of dispute.*" I have disputed and denied the truth of every item except the last. But these words betray the secret anxiety of the reviewer. His feeling was: Hitherto I have handled matters of fact that few will care to investigate. Now I approach a tender point, on which I shall have opposed to me the moral sense of the honourable portion of the community. "*In these volumes will be found a correspondence, THE PUBLICATION OF WHICH WE CANNOT CONDEMN, although we think that nothing but the filial duty of vindicating their father's highest title to renown could have justified his sons in giving it to the world.*" And the motto of our volume is,

"Index damnatur cum nocens absolvitur."

It is then only because the renown of Mr. Wilberforce is spread, or rather enhanced by his having *received*, against his will, pressing solicitations for patronage or for money, that the strictly confidential letters which are supposed to record these facts, are justifiably published: for as to Mr. Wilberforce's share in the Correspondence, all that might have been published, as many other things are in the Life, without a name. Now my astonishment exceeds expression, that any writer can be found with the faculty of rounding periods so successfully as the Edinburgh Reviewer, who is capable of insisting, that a title to renown can be "*vindicated*" by any such act; the writer, at the same time, in terms admitting that there is no other defence open to them. There is indeed another, and that a very mercan-

tile idea: viz. that there is but a certain amount of renown to be distributed; and that if any claimant can be dismissed, as unworthy to be a participator of it, there will be a better dividend for others. Seriously speaking, this seems to be an illusion that haunts the Messrs. Wilberforce and their ally, that, by degrading Mr. Clarkson, Mr. Wilberforce will be exalted. To this deplorable mistake I ascribe alike the outrage and the attempted justification.

Another excuse is suggested for this breach of confidence by the authors. These letters "exhibit Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Clarkson in relations very different from any thing that the history of the abolition suggests,"—vol. i. p. 141. Now, in common speech, *different from* means *other than*. In serious writing such words mean *incompatible with*, and therefore are unwarrantably used here. These letters have no direct bearing whatever on the abolition. They throw no light on any fact recorded in the history. They explain no passage; but they tend to degrade the author. Mr. Clarkson has not lessened the dignity of his subject, by adverting in his History (except once on a slight occasion) to pecuniary matters either as obligations or sacrifices. He mentioned neither the subscription nor the expenditure of his own fortune, which rendered the reimbursement a mere act of justice.

This vindication of the breach of confidence in publishing these letters on the ground of *necessity*, is accompanied by professions of deep sorrow both by the reviewer and the biographers. And these are so often repeated, that it really seems as if they thought they should gain credit by them. But these lamentations, so far from being any mitigation of the offence in my judgment, infinitely aggravate it. The unreflecting reader, who might not have remarked the shallowness of the pretence of necessity, might be led to measure the heinousness of the offence disclosed: I, on the contrary, measure the offence of the disclosure itself by the professed pain of those who make it. The more disreputable the letters are to the writer, the more unpardonable is the publication. Unfortunately for the biographer's

credit the converse of the proposition is not true; and to whatever degree Mr. Clarkson may have justified himself, he has thereby in no degree excused them. If they say: Where is the harm of publishing what Mr. Clarkson has shown to be so much less exceptionable than we first thought it to be? The answer is, your own lamentation is the measure of your culpability. The foul blow is not less foul because it misses its aim.

This recklessness of conduct, covered, not concealed, by professions of sensibility, has been pressed upon me, with, I believe, no unfriendly intention. It has been said: The Edinburgh Review is a manifesto against Mr. Clarkson: and the preface to the Life in which the intention to publish more letters is avowed, is a sort of *threatening circular*. Since the Messrs. Wilberforce, without any provocation whatever, have published such letters as hitherto gentlemen have thought peculiarly sacred, what may they not do in anger, and under the pretext of personal vindication? During forty years Mr. Clarkson must have written many letters. (Mr. Clarkson himself says many hundreds.) And there are not only his own, but many thousands of letters, by common friends and acquaintances. With such copious materials for selection, through so long a course of years, what may not be found? Any thing and every thing may be made out of private letters with a little skill in arrangement, where there is a great deal of ill will to stimulate, and no scrupulousness to restrain. When read with the honestest intentions, they are easily misunderstood. They present ample opportunities for misrepresentation. The hint, the irony, the playful exaggeration, the unavowed quotation, the allusion imperfectly given, the occasion unexplained, and other incidents peculiar to epistolary writings, render a simple letter a powerful instrument. There is still a remedy against the garbling of a single letter. A sight of it may be demanded. But a whole correspondence may be garbled as well as a particular letter: and against this sort of garbling there is no remedy, as there are no means of detection. The half jocular, half serious

allusion to eccentricities in one letter may be exhibited; the generous acknowledgment of virtues which put all eccentricities into shade in another letter may be withheld; the petulant complaint may be shown, the frank confession of wrong concealed.

The truth of all this has been felt; but Mr. Clarkson's *Strictures* are now published, notwithstanding such intimations. Perhaps the Messrs. Wilberforce may have some friend sincere and bold enough to remind them that, by the course they have begun, and seem tempted to continue, they put the honour of Mr. Wilberforce in jeopardy. For these questions will obtrude themselves: Were these letters purposely preserved by Mr. Wilberforce during thirty long years, and while he continued to profess esteem and affection for Mr. Clarkson, and did he intend that, in due season, they should be brought forward? Were they preserved through inadvertence; Mr. Wilberforce supposing he had destroyed them? Or were these more especially among the papers Mr. Wilberforce gave directions to have destroyed? And are they now made public in opposition to his will and express orders? The Messrs. Wilberforce alone can answer these questions. These are questions of family honour. It rests with them to vindicate themselves at the expense of their father's reputation, or at least make him a participator in whatever censure may be cast on them; or they may take the whole responsibility on themselves.

The same friend may suggest to them, that, in their portrayal of their father, they have shown almost as much anxiety to establish for him the character of a perfect gentleman as a perfect Christian; and it would be doing them great wrong not to think that they meant to emulate both kinds of excellence. I presume not to ask them what example they can find in any clergyman for such a course. I may ask, however, what gentleman — in birth, station, or fortune — ever before published such a letter as the one respecting the subscription? the writer being also a gentleman, and their father's friend, and alive to feel all the

pain which their own ostentatious lamentations show they anticipate. Ever since letters have been a saleable commodity, needy men have been unscrupulous: but I am assured these gentlemen have no excuse of that kind, nor will I give credence to the sarcastic insinuations on this subject in the Quarterly Review.

If however these gentlemen persist in the course they have begun, I hope that this good may follow from it to qualify the certain evil; that it may quicken the public sense to so clear a perception of the evil of such conduct as to lead to a cure. Already three classes of books are excluded from a large proportion of gentlemen's libraries; — works of obscenity, blasphemy, and mendacious libel. Let us hope that soon *Confidential Letters* published during the life of the writer, or after his decease, without his permission or that of his representatives, may be placed under a like ban of proscription; for to these may be fitly applied one of Coleridge's fine expressions: "*These are not the inventions, but the implements, of malice.*" I do not mean to suggest that this fourth class is of equal enormity with the three others; yet in one respect it is even more mischievous than any of them. The authors of those works are so universally reprobated, that their bad fame deters from, and does not tempt to imitation; but the stigma is not yet universally fixed on those who thus betray private confidence, — we may hope it soon will be: And there is a numerous class of persons on whom the *Life of Mr. Wilberforce* may do permanent injury. It is precisely because the Messrs. Wilberforce are — the Messrs. Wilberforce, bear an honoured name, fill a certain station in society, and are objects of respect; that their book is likely to do far greater injury to society than such a work for instance, as the "*Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth*;" which, exciting only contempt, is harmless, when its nine days of annoyance to individuals and wonder to the multitude are passed away; but as long as the *Life of Mr. Wilberforce* continues to be read, it will tend to weaken the bonds of social intercourse among the

better classes of the community ; and supply an apology for the gratification of the worst of passions. For " if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? " *

I return from this digression to the reviewer: "*The effect of it is to show that Mr. Clarkson's services were remunerated by a large subscription, and that his private interests on this occasion were urged on him with an importunity of which it would be painful to transfer the record to these pages,*" and which it was not at all unpleasant so to allude to in those pages, as to leave an impression on the reader's mind quite as unfavourable to Mr. Clarkson as the transfer itself could have been. This turn of expression comes out of the school of Mrs. Candour. But the substance of this is in two respects most objectionable. Mr. Clarkson has so solemnly denied that he was *remunerated* for his services (p. 69.), that further observation may seem superfluous. But it ought to be known that this is the charge, not of the biographers, but of their reviewer. The correspondence proves that the subscription was to reimburse, not remunerate. I deeply regret that as public notice was taken of this aggravation by the reviewer of

* Of course I am well aware that there are many cases of exception, which it could serve no good purpose to attempt defining. I have in my mind at this moment one class which does not include many specimens, over which the possessor enjoys large discretionary powers. A recent occurrence will fully explain what I mean: Sir Henry Bunbury has appended to his Correspondence of Sir Thomas Hanbury, a letter by Mr. Wordsworth to Mr. Charles Fox on the condition of the labouring classes in England. And Sir Henry frankly confesses that he published it without asking permission, because he would not incur the risk " of a refusal, and thus deprive the world of a piece which reflects the purest honour on its writer, and is calculated to warm and improve the feelings of those who read it." Having also read this admirable letter, which thousands may delight in, who, having no love of poetry of any kind, cannot enjoy even Mr. Wordsworth ; I will for once assume the tone of an Edinburgh reviewer and say, *We cannot condemn Sir Henry for so doing.*

the author's charges, the earliest opportunity was not gladly made use of to correct the misrepresentation. Further; Mr. Clarkson has shown that these letters were not written properly to promote his interests, which were already secured. It may be said, however, that this does not clearly appear on the face of the letters. That may be doubtful; but at all events this circumstance shows how dangerous it is to compose narratives from letters when the parties cannot explain them; and how disingenuous to give the worst construction to them:—

“*Remembering the advanced age, the eminent services, and the spotless character of that venerable and excellent man, we must be permitted to express our very deep regret that the ill-judged encomiums of his friends should have contributed to the publication of any thing which could for a moment disturb the serenity of the closing scenes of a life distinguished, as we believe, by the exercise of every social and domestic virtue, and the most unwearied beneficence to men of every condition and every country.*” Now I put it to the conscience of the writer of these words: Whether it was not the object of the biographers to cast a spot upon that character so spotless before; and his own, to render it indelible?—Whether it was not alike his and their aim to render him less an object of veneration than he had been? Indeed when the sentence is closely examined, it will be found that the deep regret, here expressed, is not for the publication itself, or the disturbance of the serenity of the closing scenes, but on account of the ill-judged encomiums which “contributed to” (the writer means *occasioned*) the publication; that is, Wordsworth's Sonnet and Southey's Stanza. This I can credit, for the praise of poets confers immortality.

The reviewer then characterises Mr. Wilberforce's qualifications as the conductor of the great abolition cause; and studiously frames it so as to involve a depreciation of Mr. Clarkson. I will not be tempted to follow his example; and therefore shall advert to such portions only of this characteristic as connect themselves with my object. He

begins by conceding that Mr. Wilberforce did not effect the abolition alone: he had associates, — Mr. Brougham, Mr. Stephen, and Mr. Macauley. The introduction of these names, and no other, might indicate merely that the writer, being comparatively young, was acquainted only with the later associates of Mr. Wilberforce. All these gentlemen were, in a certain sense, successors to Mr. Clarkson: but Mr. W. Smith laboured from the beginning and continued to the end. He would have been named certainly, had he not been Mr. Clarkson's friend.

“It may further be admitted that systematic and very continuous labours were not consonant with his (W.'s) intellectual character, or with the labours of his life. But to the office which he had undertaken, he brought qualifications still more rare and of far higher importance. It was within the reach of ordinary talents to collect, to examine, and to digest evidence, and to prepare and distribute popular publications; but it required a mind,” &c. It is notorious that the faculty of systematic and continuous labours was pre-eminently Mr. Clarkson's; and what follows is meant to be a summary of his merits and claims to distinction. I resist a strong temptation in abstaining from remarking on the admission as concerns Mr. Wilberforce: but I will not offend Mr. Clarkson, by making any remark tending, however slightly, to depreciate Mr. Wilberforce; I therefore turn to Mr. Clarkson. Were it conceded that his were ordinary talents, it would not follow that he was an ordinary man. Greatness lies, not in what a man has, but on what he is. Of this hereafter: for the present, I beg that the reviewer's choice phrase may not be overlooked. The merit of distributing (as a hawker and pedlar might do) publications is put on a level with preparing them. This is, however, surpassed by a precious sarcasm in the *Life*. It is said (vol. i. p. 230.), speaking of Mr. Clarkson's first journey to Paris, “*Mirabeau withstood a bribe in his zeal for abolition, and the amiable Louis gave a no less emphatic pledge of favour in his unwearied perusal of one of Mr. Clarkson's Volumes.*” Mr. Robert Wilberforce pro-

mised that the book should contain as little insult as possible. Wherein the necessity of this insult lies, does not appear. How deeply seated must the scorn be that would burst out in this digression!

A word or two only of Mr. Clarkson's literary pretensions: I know no man who is more free from all vanity, and especially literary vanity. I believe he never had a thought beyond the attainment of his object. His early connection with the Quakers led him to become familiar with their writings, and to form his style on their autobiographic works, of which the most delightful specimen is John Woolman's Life. Charles Lamb (an exquisite judge in all such matters) used to place this book next to the Pilgrim's Progress. It requires, undoubtedly, a peculiar taste to enjoy such books; and I am neither surprised nor offended at those who cannot relish Mr. Clarkson's History of the Abolition: but I must be allowed to smile at the judgment of those who reproach it for its egotism. The narrative of every incident in which Mr. Clarkson takes part, is written with such earnestness and feeling as to secure the sympathy of the reader. Had the author confined his history to his personal adventures, and entitled his work Memoirs, not History, it would have obtained a place of distinction in that very delightful class of compositions, autobiography. The style of Mr. Clarkson's writings may be abandoned to the sneers of Messrs. Wilberforce and their friend; and the talent these exhibit may be as ordinary as they please: but surely it behoved these gentlemen not entirely to overlook in what estimation Mr. Wilberforce held them, and what their effect was. It is of one of these "prepared and circulated" popular publications that Mr. Wilberforce wrote — *it is your doing under Providence !!* It is true; Providence works by *ordinary talents* as well as by brilliant genius; but it is not usual for those who deeply venerate the beneficent dispensations of Providence to delight in depreciating its chosen instrument. Of the eulogy of Mr. Wilberforce I will give a specimen: "The political position assigned to him by his constituency in

Yorkshire, the multitude and intimacy of his personal friendships, the animal spirits which knew no ebb, the insinuating graces of his conversation, the graceful flow of his natural eloquence, and an address at once the gayest and the most affectionate, marked him out *as the only man of his age to whom it could have been possible to conduct such a struggle through all its ceaseless difficulties and disappointments.*"

I neither deny that Mr. Wilberforce was adorned with all these graces, nor will I puritanically dispute their compatibility with all the higher virtues which he undoubtedly did possess.

"Where virtue is, these make more virtuous."

But I may be allowed to say that I think their introduction *here* in not the best taste. This florid sentence reads as if it were copied out of a rhetorical common-place book and put in the wrong place.

"Jewels at nose and lip but ill appear."

The *struggle* of the abolitionists was the conflict of humanity,—the roused humanity of the people of England,—with the selfishness of the monied aristocracy of the nation. There were occasions certainly when Mr. Wilberforce made that use of his social qualities which the reviewer celebrates; but I cannot help imagining that he would have thrown into the back-ground rather than made a boast of such means, as materially aiding him to achieve his victory. Let the reader compare the style of this eulogy with that of Mr. Clarkson's History, copied *antè*, 18. and 19.: he will find them very different certainly. I believe it to be in more perfect harmony with the pure spirit of Mr. Wilberforce than any other that has yet been pronounced: That it should not have been cited by the biographers is sufficiently accounted for on the principle, on which even the unexceptionable books of heretical writers are put into the Roman index—*in odio authoris*.

If the sons have faithfully represented their father; he

would at any time within the last 15 or 20 years of his life, have been delighted, not disgusted, by the Quaker-like simplicity and cordiality of tone in the testimony delivered by his friend; he would have accepted his praise with the grateful humility with which a good man receives the commendations of a congenial spirit: while he would have rejected the more ornate and artificial compliments of the Edinburgh reviewer with a distaste approaching to disgust.

I have now commented on all that the reviewer has alleged of Mr. Clarkson; and might here close, if it were not absolutely necessary that I should draw the reader's attention to the artifice common to the biographers and the reviewer, of studiously keeping out of sight those incidents in Mr. Clarkson's Life which, independently of all other services, will determine his place in history among the great benefactors of mankind; by substantiating his claim to the honour of being prime mover in the successful agitation of the great Abolition cause—a claim that in no respect interferes with any asserted superiority of Mr. Wilberforce, or other abolitionist over him. These are the facts which are established on such historical evidence as cannot now be possibly shaken; it being remembered, that Mr. Clarkson's own statement published thirty years ago, and never hitherto contradicted or disputed by any man, but corroborated by every witness recently alive; are the best historical evidence. It was in the autumn of 1785, that Mr. Clarkson solemnly devoted his life to the Abolition cause. At that time, a few scattered individuals, among whom was Mr. Wilberforce,—but they were chiefly among the Quakers—were sensible of all the horrors of slavery and the Slave Trade. Many a pious prayer had been breathed in their behalf, and many a benevolent wish secretly nourished; but no one public act tending towards abolition, had been done when Mr. Clarkson left college, with his prize essay in his pocket, and came to London to perform the vow he had uttered, and devote his life to the abolition of the Slave Trade. He combined with zeal an

intelligence and a power of endurance seldom found in one man. He immediately took the best, the only means, to effect his purpose. He looked out for friends and associates. The first he found were Quakers — some half dozen, who united in a little society. He joined them, and infused practical vigour into their otherwise quiescent body. He joined with these few, other mercantile friends; and by mere personal solicitation, going from house to house, and from man to man, he brought together the original committee, who were all collected in the City of London. But at the same time he went among public men; he waited upon peers, bishops, and members of the House of Commons, and his book was a master-key to open both doors and hearts. It was in this way that he met with Mr. Wilberforce: to him, as to others, he introduced himself with the translation of his prize essay; and it is one of his great merits, that he at once discerned in that gentleman, his unrivalled qualifications to be the leader in the great warfare that was soon to commence. He did not, indeed, (nor has he ever insinuated that he did) inspire him with zeal for the cause. He found Mr. Wilberforce as deeply impressed as himself with all those religious feelings which had excited himself from the first; and in heart already his associate. He gave Mr. Wilberforce information of the City society then actually forming; he informed his City friends of the very able man he had found; he concerted with an earlier friend (Mr. Bennet Langton), the meeting at which Mr. Wilberforce was formally invited to become the parliamentary leader in the forthcoming discussions. It was by bringing together Mr. Wilberforce and the Committee, after he had by his journeys to Bristol established grounds as well of policy as of humanity, for the interference of the legislature, that he became *the author* (as far as any one man could be) *of the Abolition*.

Had Mr. Clarkson died in October, 1787, he would have merited the statue, seen in vision by the Laureat; for he had framed a mighty engine which was to effect what the labours of individuals could not possibly have achieved.

But his own labours were only begun. The engine being framed; he became the head workman; and, in the discharge of the self-imposed functions, he

“The humblest duties on himself did lay.”

It is not disputed that, at the commencement of the great struggle, no man equalled him in zeal, and activity, and in the variety of his labours. So overwhelming were his exertions, that his life was saved only by his retirement. These labours are, indeed, by no means denied. In the *Life* they are, as in the *Review*, frequently adverted to; but with such accompaniments as to render Mr. Clarkson just as grateful for them as Bentley and the other scholars were to Pope, for his acknowledgment of their merits:—

“Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence” —

when it served to point the satire,

“And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense.”

Though the Messrs. Wilberforce knew that he was a very prominent member of the Committee the fact is withheld; and he is never spoken of but as the *agent*; and the reviewer gives colour to this discreditable appellation by adding, that he was remunerated for his services. The care and solicitude with which it has been done are quite remarkable; and with all this there is a tone of kindness that might deceive. In another portion of the *Review*, the sufferings of Mr. Wilberforce at the retirement of Mr. Clarkson from the Committee, is mentioned even pathetically; but the passage, interpreted by the rest of the article, expresses no more than the grief of the Head of the house when the old clerk is forced to retire, who worked so hard and was so attached to the firm. There is a dispensation, according to which they who humble themselves shall be exalted; but the humbler services of Mr. Clarkson are brought forward only in such a way as to leave an impression that all his merit lay in these alone.

It was shortly before the final passing of the Abolition Act that Mr. Clarkson's re-established health enabled him to return to the Committee; and after the passing of that great act, he turned his mind with renovated earnestness and zeal to the cause of emancipation; though he never afterwards resided in London, and could only occasionally interpose with his counsel, and most powerfully aid with his pen.

I shall be pardoned noticing Mr. Clarkson's subsequent services, though unconnected with the Review or Life. The letters of Mr. Wilberforce show in what estimation he held these later services, and the conclusive testimony of Lord Brougham extends to the later as well as the earlier exertions of Mr. Clarkson. I rejoice in the means afforded me of adding to his Lordship's testimony that of almost the only man whom I could with any propriety name after Lord Brougham—Mr. Fowell Buxton; who, after the retirement from parliament of Mr. Wilberforce, became the leader of the African cause in the House of Commons, to which he alone could give undivided attention. His exertions on behalf of the negroes, the apprentices, are recollected with gratitude, and will secure his name a high and permanent station with those of the other distinguished friends of the African race. I had remarked in a letter written by him to Mr. Clarkson, in 1833, this passage: "I trust you are really cheered and happy in the contemplation of the Abolition of Slavery; I am sure you ought to be, for you have greatly contributed towards it. I always think your pamphlet, which first gave us the *true tone*, was of most essential importance to our cause." Wishing to know which of Mr. Clarkson's pamphlets he might have particularly in his mind at the time, I inquired of him. His answer, though not satisfactory on that point, bears so cordial a testimony to his sense of Mr. Clarkson's services, that I gladly avail myself of his permission to insert it here.

“Leamington, July 24. 1838.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“I regret that I cannot recollect the title of the pamphlet* to which I alluded, in the letter to our friend Clarkson. When you write to him, I beg you will convey to him, not my regards only, but my sincere and deep gratitude for the vast services which he has rendered to the cause of humanity and of freedom. I am sincerely sorry that any thing has occurred to disturb his repose. My wish has always been, that he would abstain from taking any notice whatever of those unhappy passages in the Life of Wilberforce, which seem to reflect upon him. What need has he of a vindication? He must know, that there is more true glory in such achievements than in all the victories of the heroes and conquerors who have slaughtered mankind. And why should any comparison be instituted between him and Wilberforce? Each had the honour of being chosen by Providence, and fitted for his peculiar department. Each most nobly performed his allotted task; and neither could have accomplished his part without the co-operation of the other. † Excuse me for these rambling remarks. I may as well add, for it may be gratifying to our surviving friend to know it, that I never heard Wilberforce mention his name without affection and respect.

“Believe me, my dear Sir,

“Very truly yours,

“T. F. BUXTON.”

“H. C. Robinson, Esq.”

* This I think must have been the “Thoughts on the necessity of improving the Condition of the Slaves in the British colonies with a view to their ultimate emancipation.” My copy is fourth edition, 1824.

† Mr. Clarkson has always thought thus. The eulogium on Mr. Wilberforce in his history cited above (p. 18.) is introduced by a quaint simile, comparing the Committee to a human body made up of head and various members, all of which are alike necessary. In the application, Mr. Wilberforce is considered as the head. The utmost that Mr. Clarkson can be thought to have insinuated of himself is that he was the right arm: and that surely ought not to have offended the sons of Mr. Wilberforce.

The personal character of Mr. Buxton stands so high, beyond even the attempt at imputation of any kind, that there cannot be a fitter opportunity than this, for noticing a remarkable paragraph from the pen of Mr. Wilberforce's sons. Giving these gentlemen credit for sympathising with their father in the great achievement of his public life; we should expect to find them delicate, indulgent, and charitable, towards those who, to whatever party in church or state they belonged, succeeded him in his labours; and were the instruments in carrying into execution the further great work of emancipation. But it is not so; on the contrary, this is their tone. They expatiate (1,153) on the great importance to the cause, that its leader "could combine and render irresistible the scattered sympathies of the religious classes." "Its first supporters, accordingly, were not found among the partisans of political commotion, but amongst the educated and religious. 'Many of the clergy,' writes Granville Sharp, 'are firm and cordial friends to the undertaking,' &c. If any thing were wanted to complete this proof, it would be found in the *grievous injury the cause sustained in later years from the character of its chief political supporters.*" I was not before aware that the chief supporters of the emancipation cause in parliament belonged to the irreligious party; and should have thought, that, if true, the Messrs. Wilberforce would have been the last to obtrude the fact on public notice. This stigma, cast on so large a portion of Mr. Wilberforce's associates, renders less surprising the particular acrimony towards one individual.

This seems a fit place for introducing another testimony which has only just reached me:—this is also from Lord Brougham. I extract it from Tait's Magazine, in which the forthcoming speeches of his Lordship are noticed. I do not think this short and excellent characteristic in any way superseded by the letter I have taken the liberty to prefix to the Strictures. It was written probably *ante litem motam*. The letter to Mr. Clarkson is *upon* the controversy itself. It is often doubtful which sort of testimony

has the greatest weight. The combination of both is always desirable. In the present instance; from such a man, with such means of information, it is absolutely conclusive. "Granville Sharpe was followed in his bright course by Thomas Clarkson, of whom it has been justly said, nor can higher praise be earned by man, that, to the great and good qualities of Las Casas — his benevolence — his unwearied perseverance — his inflexible determination of purpose, — piety which would honour a saint — courage which would accomplish a martyr, — he added the sound judgment and strict sense of justice which were wanting in the otherwise perfect character of the Spanish philanthropist. While pursuing his studies at Cambridge, he made the Slave Trade the subject of an essay, which gained one of the university prizes; and this accident having called his especial attention to the iniquity of that execrable commerce, he devoted his life to waging an implacable hostility with it. *The evidence which he collected and brought before a committee formed to obtain its abolition, drew the attention of Mr. Wilberforce, and secured at once the services of that great man as the leader in the cause.*" — Tait's Edinburgh Magazine for August, 1838, p. 481.

I think I better perform the task I undertook, in thus giving circulation to testimonies like these, than in opposing to the elaborate eulogies on Mr. Wilberforce any attempt of my own to characterise my revered friend. I feel my incompetence to do this as it ought to be done; and if I could, this is not the fit occasion — though it is allowable to speak of a man in his 79th year in another tone than might be spoken of him in his 50th: yet I will not wound his modesty by any of those praises that are unseemly when addressed to the subject of them — I will advert merely to some of those moral rather than intellectual qualities which may be hinted at without flattery, and which were called into exercise in the great cause of the Abolition. The Messrs. Wilberforce and their Reviewer seem to have thought it above all things necessary to show *how many talents* were entrusted to their father; and that his glory

requires that Mr. Clarkson's talents should be reduced as low as possible. Since even they will not pretend that it was hid in a napkin, let it be only one. The one talent I ascribe to Mr. Clarkson, is that which the biographers will not grudge him, for their Reviewer disclaims it for their father—"the power of systematic and continuous labour." It will not lose much on the ground of its singleness, if it be found in combination with

"Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill."

How was it husbanded and applied?—In the first place, its object was *great*—the redemption of millions of his fellow-creatures from misery. It was combined with an intelligence spacious enough to discern both evil and remedy. There was in the constitution of Mr. Clarkson's mind, no quality to disturb, or weaken, or misdirect the application of it—there was nothing wavering, nothing theoretical, nothing visionary in his nature: he was subservient to no impulses: He was so thoroughly a practical man, that even what might be thought a defect in his mind aided him in his active exertions. His friends would occasionally smile at perceiving in him something like obtuseness of understanding in this — that he could never think an objection unanswerable nor a difficulty, insuperable. When he was satisfied that any thing ought to be done, he was slow in comprehending that it could not. His imagination was always on the cheerful side. He lived in hope and faith that the good that ought to be effected, would be effected; and was always willing to be himself the labourer, if no one fitter for the work could be found. The collecting and embodying that evidence which alone could convince so cautious a minister as Mr. Pitt, and by aid of which alone a hearing was obtained in parliament, and the cause gained in public opinion; was not only his project but his execution. He shunned no undertaking because it was perilous — no labour because it was arduous; nor did he neglect means because they could effect but little. His

whole life has been spent in compliance with the precept, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth thee to do, do it with thy might." These, it may be said, are faculties as much the gift of Providence as genius or beauty. This is true: but the consecration of them to a great end during a long life—that was his own will—and the Reviewer must pardon my whispering in his ear that there is in such a will consummated in action a character of *greatness*. He was not impeded in the discharge of any self-imposed duty by sloth or by vanity or timidity: he would at one time, to obtain knowledge, disguise his person as a sailor, and, at great risk, inspect the interior of a slave-ship; at another, he would plead the cause of the poor negroes before the Emperor of Russia; and, to crown the whole, that which he once was, he was always—he is now as ardent and alive in the cause of emancipation as he was fifty years ago in the cause of the Abolition.

This last quality, and I believe his other virtues, were recognised by Mr. Wilberforce. In his letter of Jan. 1826 he expressed his joy at Mr. Clarkson's power of continued exertion. The willingness he knew would last to the end. In this he foresaw truly. But this he did not, happily for his own repose, foresee—that when that end—the end of slavery—should arrive, and the perfect triumph of emancipation be achieved, Mr. Clarkson would not be permitted to contemplate the victory with undisturbed joy: that he who had so often fought by his side, would then have to gird up his loins to a personal defence against the sons of his old leader and comrade; and that those sons, his own sons, would combine their powers in heaping sarcasm and insult upon his aged friend, and would hunt out materials amid a mass of disregarded papers which had been accumulated for thirty years. Had Mr. Wilberforce foreseen this, and that this would be proclaimed to the world as assisting to establish his own just title to renown, he would have exclaimed in the bitterness of his heart, "*Rid me and deliver me from strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity.*"

II.

ON THE MINUTE BOOKS OF THE ABOLITION SOCIETY.

MR. CLARKSON has spoken of these books (p. 35.) as being in the possession of the Messrs. Wilberforce. He had demanded the return of them; and they were afterwards sent to his order, but forwarded to me, not him. They have reached me in time to enable me to add an important illustration of the *Life* as a work of history; and an exhibition of the authors' mode of referring to the only historical document their *Life* contains any notice of. The *Quarterly Review* has characterised the *History of the Abolition struggle* included in the *Life* as a "rambling and confused one," "like all the rest of the volumes, composed of desultory memoranda." The reader will bear in mind in what tone the authors have presumed to speak of Mr. Clarkson's *History* (*antè*, p. 38.). To the authority of his book they oppose their own; forgetting that as they were scarcely born when the *History* appeared, they can have no authority as witnesses. Their statements, especially when intimated by themselves to be contradictory to Mr. Clarkson's, should have been accompanied by something like evidence: yet their references are to nothing but private letters, fragments of letters, and minute extracts from diaries. There is, however, one notable exception — they repeatedly refer to these very books. Their one great object in referring to them is, to supply something like a colour for their pretence, that the *Abolition* was Mr. Wilberforce's *personal* concern, in which he was the principal,

and the very Society, "instituted in 1787 for effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade," at the utmost only his allies! They gave an account of the origin of this Society, p. 152. (*antè*, 162.) I must be excused a repetition. "Their first meeting was held upon the 22d of May, 1787, when Granville Sharp was elected chairman of the twelve who met together, most of whom were London merchants, and all but two Quakers. This body soon increased, and grew into a valuable ally of Mr. Wilberforce. It was long, indeed, before his name was openly enrolled amongst their number, because his exertions promised to be more effectual, by his being independent of them; but from the first he directed their proceedings." (*Vide MS. Transactions of the Abolition Society.*)

This assertion Mr. Clarkson has peremptorily denied; and that will be deemed sufficient as to the fact itself. I have only to deal with the "*Vide MS. Transactions of the Abolition Society;*" and I will lay before the reader every reference to Mr. Wilberforce on the books till his name was "openly enrolled."

The first is dated six months after his supposed secret direction of their proceedings: — "1787, October 30th, the Treasurer reports that he has received a letter from W. Wilberforce, Esq., *requesting information as speedily as possible* relative to the Slave Trade: Resolved, that Granville Sharp, Samuel Hoare, junior, and Philip Sansom be a committee to confer from time to time with W. Wilberforce, Esq., on the subject of the Slave Trade, and to communicate such information as may occur." It is a pity for the biographers that this minute should record only that Mr. Wilberforce sought for information from the body he was directing. However, after another four months we do, in fact, find something emanating from him, viz. — "February 16th, 1788, Mr. Clarkson, having reported that Mr. Wilberforce had strongly recommended to the Committee to be provided with evidence to be laid before the Privy Council in proof of the inhumanity and impolicy of the Slave Trade: Resolved, that Mr. Clarkson

be requested to arrange the evidence necessary for that purpose, and that the following gentlemen be appointed a sub-committee to assist him therein." This was too important for the biographers not to be particularly noticed; and therefore they make an especial reference to it thus: "Meanwhile, at Mr. Wilberforce's suggestion, the friends of Abolition prepared their evidence, and marshalled their witnesses." (Vide Minutes of the Abolition Committee. February 16. 1788.) The important difference between a *strong recommendation* and a *suggestion* must not be overlooked. It would naturally be inferred from the latter expression, that the idea of preparing such evidence emanated from Mr. Wilberforce; and yet a very little reflection would have reminded the authors that the Society was itself formed, and Mr. Clarkson's laborious journeys were undertaken for scarcely any other than this purpose. It was the one great business of the Society, and the recommendation was quite superfluous, except as an urging to *immediate activity*. That end was at all events attained; and Mr. Clarkson immediately set about what is here called arranging, in common speech, *getting up* the evidence for the Privy Council.

But the biographers have not done with their references yet, for they go on, p. 183.—"Throughout this time," [an expression that implies a multiplicity of incidents, and the time being generally the year 1788,] "throughout this time, the operations of the London Committee for procuring the Abolition of the Slave Trade were directed by his advice. The inquiries of the Privy Council were suspended for the summer, and the friends of Abolition were employed in keeping alive the general interest of the country, and gaining a larger mass of evidence for future use. To effect these purposes, they resolved to institute corresponding committees, and to hold a public meeting in the metropolis. Of these resolutions *they were persuaded by Mr. Wilberforce's arguments to modify the first and rescind the second.* (MS. Proceedings of the Committee.)

Now to explain this, I should state that Mr. Clarkson had formed a project of establishing county-committees to

stir up the nation. As usual, he offered to carry his own project into execution; and a minute of the 10th of June records the acceptance of his offer by the Committee. Then follows a minute on the 29th July, 1783, of the appointment of a sub-committee "to correspond and advise with Mr. Clarkson from time to time during his present journey, for the purpose of establishing committees in various districts of the country, "*paying regard to the advice contained in Mr. Wilberforce's Letter to the Treasurer of the 8th of July, to avoid giving any possible occasion of offence to the Legislature by forced unnecessary associations.*"

This is all; and there is no trace on the books of any modifying or rescinding of resolutions. Where the evidence for this statement is, the biographers alone know. It is not where they state it to be. The incident supposed is not improbable in itself, and corresponds with the anti-popular turn of Mr. Wilberforce's mind. — Such is the evidence of the repeatedly cited books in proof of Mr. Wilberforce having *directed* the Committee. I wish to add one remark: He only can be said to be the *director* of a measure who points out *what is to be done* — who suggests and proposes; not he who merely criticises and objects, and warns — such a person is not the director. He may be a useful or cautious adviser; and it is in this character, only that these minute-books show Mr. Wilberforce. I promised however to report every mention of his name. I must go back a few months: — On the 8th of April, 1788, Mr. Clarkson and two other gentlemen are requested to obtain his opinion about a motion to be made in the House of Commons. A subsequent minute, 22d April, reports his ill-health, and gives an account of an interview between Mr. Pitt and Granville Sharp; Mr. Pitt having (as the Life states) undertaken to supply Mr. Wilberforce's place: the minister (by the bye) in sending for the Chairman of the Society, shows that he considered the cause *theirs*.

The minute-books of the year 1789 all concur in representing the Committee as the actor in the business. On the 24th of February a committee is appointed, of Mr.

Clarkson and four others, to inform Mr. Wilberforce that "several of the evidence collected by the Committee have already left the kingdom," and urging him to bring the matter before the House. 3d of March Mr. Wilberforce is said to have concurred. On the 6th of April his motion in Parliament is reported. On the 19th of May there is a formal vote of thanks.

The year 1790 is an entire blank as respects Mr. Wilberforce; except that, on the 30th of November, the Chairman is requested to wait on him, and submit to his consideration the propriety of his moving in the Commons for certain muster-rolls of seamen. On the 29th of March, 1791, the result of this motion is reported; and Mr. Clarkson is requested to submit to his consideration a like motion for surgeons' registers in slave-ships. And on the 26th of April, 1791, he was elected a member of the Committee, together with Lord Muncaster, Messrs. C. J. Fox, W. Smith, and W. Burgh. The result of this examination is: That these books, instead of proving what the references of the Messrs. Wilberforce were calculated to make their readers believe, that the Committee were under the direction of Mr. Wilberforce, and a sort of ally of his; show that for three years he stood in the ordinary relation of a parliamentary representative of parties in a concern which, though not legally private, was of the nature of private business, and opposed by interested parties. They show that the Committee were the *actors* throughout the whole affair, which was carried on at their expense and by their evidence, as well before the Privy Council as the Parliamentary Committees. In their report to the Society for 1788 they refer to his illness in apology for their delay, and they vote thanks to him in terms of grateful praise.

But not only have the Messrs. Wilberforce cited these books when in their own custody; Mr. Clarkson appealed to them when in the possession of his adversaries. I am bound to say they prove his case abundantly. There are various incidents recorded in them which he was not, perhaps, aware of, but which I feel it incumbent on me to notice.*

* I throw this into a note because altogether unconnected with the text. I find a resolution of a Committee, 5th June, 1811,

It is thus the objects of the Committee, that is of the Society itself, are stated in the very first resolution: — “ May 22, 1787, resolved that Granville Sharp,” &c. [six others] “ Thomas Clarkson,” &c. [four others] “ be a committee for procuring such information and *evidence*, and for distributing *Clarkson's Essay*, and such other publications as may tend to the Abolition of the Slave Trade,” &c.

His journeys, far from being treated as the work of a stipendiary, though of course he travelled at the expense of the Society, are preceded by resolutions requesting him to undertake them, and by votes of thanks. In the Annual Report for 1789, addressed to the Society at large, his indefatigable labours are spoken of in warm praise; so that they fully warrant Mr. Clarkson's remarks on the concealment of his high station in the Society by the biographers.

The books afford no matter for comment until we arrive at the date of 1794, when Mr. Clarkson was compelled by ill-health to retire from the Committee. This is the period to which his History is brought with a minuteness that has supplied occasion to unfriendly insinuations, contrasted with the brevity with which the rest of the History is dispatched. Mr. Clarkson has made his apology, p. 60.; but since I have seen these books, I find that apology somewhat stronger than seems necessary; for it so happens that the Committee appears to have been nearly worn out with Mr. Clarkson. It is remarkable that the minutes from May 1787, to May 1794, fill 523 folio pages. From July 1794 to the Abolition in 1807, fill 76 pages. They who impute Mr. Clarkson's silence concerning the later

attended by Mr. Clarkson. “That the sum of 83*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.* be applied to the discharge of Mr. Wilberforce's share with Mr. Cadell of the loss on his Letter on the Slave Trade, in such manner as can be most conveniently arranged with Mr. Cadell.”

Here we find the committee volunteering to pay a debt of Mr. Wilberforce's, contracted by him in his zeal for the cause. I insert this for no other purpose than to show on what liberal principles the Committee acted, even towards a rich man like Mr. Wilberforce. This minute was known to the Messrs. Wilberforce when they so studiously represented it as discreditable to Mr. Clarkson, that he accepted of a reimbursement.

proceedings to an envious disposition, and an unwillingness to record any man's actions except his own*, should at all events show that there were proceedings to be recorded. (Though, indeed, a great deal more should be shown too.) These books prove that a great change in the proceedings of the Committee had taken place. Instead of meeting regularly once a fortnight, as they were accustomed to do, in April 1794, they adjourned *sine die*, giving a power to the treasurer, chairman, or three members to convene them. In that year they gave notice to quit their apartments. In 1795 the Committee met only twice, in Old Palace Yard, in Mr. Wilberforce's house. They published a sort of pathetic farewell report, urging the public to abstain from West India produce. In 1796 there were two meetings, one of which Mr. Clarkson attended. In 1797 there were two meetings, solely to answer an attack from Mr. Bryan Edwards. Then there was a pause of seven years — a pause in the Committee, and nearly in the country — a kind of suspended animation — but Mr. Wilberforce and other members made occasional motions, more in the nature of a *continual claim* than in the hope of immediate success. At length, in 1804, the cause revived, and the Committee acquired a new strength by the accession of Messrs. G. Stephen, W. Phillips, Z. Macauley, and H. Brougham. It was on the 6th of June, 1804, that these new members attended, and first came in contact with Mr. Clarkson.

The very first act of the Committee so strengthened was to circulate a pamphlet by the new member Mr. Brougham, called a *Concise Statement*, and which he had just published as an earnest of his future labours, and which gave him at once a high place among the Abolitionists. Mr. Clarkson's

* The letter of a Mr. Latrobe is given, p. 142., in support of a charge closely connected with this. He says, *many reviewers* had charged Mr. Clarkson with egotism. (The biographers have been able to find but one.) But when we find persons unfriendly enough to bring such a charge, it is quite certain they would have also charged Mr. Clarkson with misstatements, if there had been any pretence for it. Thus a frivolous imputation like this operates as an admission by an adversary of the credibility of an historian.

health however was restored, and he was able to return to his old labours. On the 29th of April, 1805, Mr. Wilberforce addressed a letter to the Committee on the necessity of again procuring witnesses to give evidence before the Lords. They were to be found out, and the business required secrecy: he writes, "I know no one who is so fit for this commission as Mr. Clarkson; and his zeal in our great cause continues so unabated that I trust, if our Committee should ask him, he would not refuse to resume his labours." Mr. Clarkson accepted the charge, and the Committee Resolved that he was entitled to their grateful acknowledgments for his readiness and zeal.

It is to be remarked that Mr. Clarkson has in his History passed over his own journey on this occasion with the same brevity with which he treated all the latter incidents. On this revival of the Committee there was no renewal of the old frequent meetings; there were only five in 1804, twelve in 1805, and seven in 1806; and in these three years Mr. Clarkson attended only eight times; but the spring of 1807 brought all the leaders together — Messrs. Clarkson, Macauley, and Brougham, especially, for a few weeks, until the great triumph was complete. On the passing of the Abolition Act there was a meeting of the Committee at the house of Mr. Wilberforce, which did not dissolve, but announced their resolution to continue, "in order to promote the observance of the act." There was an adjournment "subject to his call." It is probable that, at this time, the Committee had in fact settled into that relation towards Mr. Wilberforce, which his sons have represented to have been the case from the beginning. Nothing is more likely than that, after the retirement of Mr. Clarkson in 1794, and when the concern nearly slept, it was left to the care of Mr. Wilberforce; and as he chiefly kept the question alive in Parliament, so also he kept the Committee alive; having, as is stated in the Edinburgh Review, and as appears on the books, after 1804, for his assistants, Messrs. Stephen, Macauley, and Brougham. The silence of Mr. Clarkson concerning Mr. Stephen alone seems to have been noticed; as far as the books show

any thing, even Lord Brougham (and to a much greater degree Mr. Macauley) should have been offended. If Lord Brougham ever felt any slight towards himself, he has taken his revenge in his own way, as appears in these sheets. But as to Mr. Stephen, these books certainly do not support the charge; for, on the face of them, Mr. Clarkson and Mr. Stephen were not brought together more than twice after their first meeting before the Abolition. Mr. Stephen's great labours and services lay in another and more important line of exertion. The Edinburgh Review enumerates, as the characteristic virtues of Messrs. Stephen and Macauley, in connection with Mr. Wilberforce; "affection, self-denial and unexampled energy." The Abolition of Slavery deserves its history no less than that of the Slave Trade. If ever that work should be written, the meed of praise will no doubt be justly awarded to these gentlemen; at all events it was their enviable lot to leave representatives eminently qualified to render due honour to their father's memory. It is not to be apprehended that, whoever of them may undertake the pious office, he will follow the sad example set him by the Messrs. Wilberforce. The biographer of either of these eminent persons will know that his claim to posthumous fame will rest on what he himself was and did, not on what any imagined competitor or rival was not or did not; and will show himself to have derived from his parent more than a name; congenial affections, and a kindly feeling towards all his father's fellow-labourers and associates.

THE END.

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